To see as a God sees : fictions of self in the works of P.B. Shelley and John Keats.

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'To see as a God sees': Fictions of the Self in the Works of P.B. Shelley and John Keats

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Abstract

This thesis offers a comparative examination of the works of Keats and Shelley, two important second-generation Romantic poets. It draws upon the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche to illuminate their treatment of the self. Despite the significant cultural, historical and generic differences, the works of Keats and Shelley share Nietzsche's conviction that art and the aesthetic are life-affirming. Nietzsche's understanding of the self as fictional is viewed, first, as being anticipated by the writings of Keats and Shelley and, secondly, as an integral part of modern constructions of Romanticism. Chapter One surveys a variety of Romantic literary criticism. Both aesthetic and theoretical readings of Keats and Shelley are shown either to have drawn parallels between their works and Nietzsche's philosophy or (particularly in the case of de Man and deconstructionists after him) to have employed certain Nietzschean critical practices and concepts. Nietzsche's philosophy is shown to have become an integral part of Romantic literary criticism. This chapter also summarises Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, his views on art, his understanding of the lyric poet, his concept of the Overman [Übermensch], and his account of the self as a fiction.

In Chapter Two the prose writings of Keats and Shelley are regarded as precursors of a Nietzschean emphasis on self-invention. Shelley's definition of poetry in A Defence of Poetry is read as encouraging a continual process of metaphorical self-revision. Shelley's aesthetics of self-revision are paralleled with Keats's concept of "Negative Capability" and the "Vale of Soul-making". The prose writings of Keats and Shelley are considered as foreshadowing Nietzsche's ideas about fiction as a mode of knowing.

Chapter Three offers a comparative reading of Keats's Endymion and Shelley's Alastor, exploring how their narratives probe the darker depths of the romance world. The tension between tragic reality and blissful illusion is considered in the light of Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian dynamic in The Birth of Tragedy. Keats and Shelley have recourse to a series of negative fictions in order to confront the tragedy underlying romance's illusions.

Chapter Four understands the major lyrical poetry of Keats and Shelley as confronting the limitations of language, art and existence. The need for the lyric poet to joyously affirm life, even in the face of tragedy and loss, is discussed in terms of Nietzsche's later view of the Dionysian category in Twilight of the Idols. These confrontations are viewed as testifying to the poetic power of Keatsian and Shelleyan fiction-making.

Chapter Five examines how Shelley's Adonais remoulds Keats's poetic character and the circumstances surrounding his death to ensure that Keats and Adonais attain a posthumous existence. Shelley is viewed as redeeming Keats and Adonais, yet as orientated by the poetic logic of Adonais towards a confrontation with his own death.

The final chapter offers a comparative reading of Keats's "Hyperion" fragments and Shelley's incomplete The Triumph of Life. The processes of self-invention at work in these fragments are viewed both as exemplifying Nietzsche's concept of becoming and as offering a critique of Enlightenment ideas about history and the self. The abrupt endings of these Romantic fragments place a responsibility on the reader to countersign the poetic identities of Keats and Shelley. To countersign these fragments is to participate in an affirmative Nietzschean "yes" saying, which will ensure the posthumous reputations of Keats and Shelley as writers.

Contents

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List of Abbreviations

Works by John Keats:

JKP — The Poems of John Keats, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978).

KL — The Letters of John Keats, ed. Hyder E. Rollins. 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1958).

Works by P.B. Shelley:

SPW — Shelley: Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, corr. G.M. Matthews (London: Oxford UP, 1970). All quotations taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

SPP — Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977).

Works by Friedrich Nietzsche:

Numbers in parenthesis directly after a quotation from a work by Nietzsche normally indicate a page number, but where indicated reference is made to a standard section or subdivision of a work. Where translators have noted difficulties with translation the German has been incorporated in the text alongside its English equivalent.

BGE — Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future. 1973. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale and intro. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990).

BT — The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random, 1967).

EH — Ecce Homo, trans and intro. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

GS — The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974). Arabic numbers in parenthesis after a quotation indicate a section.

HH — Human, All Too Human: A Book For Free Spirits. 1986. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale and intro. Richard Schacht. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy Ser. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

TI — Twilight of the Idols / The Antichrist. 1968. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale and intro. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990). Numbers in parenthesis outside of the square brackets indicate a page number and numbers within the square brackets denote a subdivision.

UM — On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, the second of the Untimely Meditations. 1983. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale and intro. J.P. Stern. Texts in German Philosophy Ser. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

WP — The Will To Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968). The first arabic number in parenthesis indicates the book, the second number a section and the third refers to a subdivision.

Z Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book For Everyone and No One. 1961. Trans. and intro. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

Other Frequently Cited Works and their Abbreviations:

Abbreviations of critical works are arranged alphabetically by title.

ADP William A. Ulmer, "'Adonais' and the Death of Poetry," SiR 32 (1993): 425-51.

AV Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1964).

BBN Harvey Birenbaum, Between Blake and Nietzsche (Toronto: Associated UP, 1992).

BI Jerome J. McGann, The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

BL Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria: Or Biographical Sketches of My Life and Work. 2 parts, vol. 7. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1983).

DF Cynthia Chase, Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986).

DI Tilottama Rajan, Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1980).

DIT Christopher Norris, Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory. 1988. (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1992).

DPS Tilottama Rajan, "Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies After Paul de Man." SiR 24 (1985): 451-74.

DRA Sean Burke, The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995).

ER Timothy Clark, Embodying Revolution: The Figure of the Poet in Shelley (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989).

HMI Michael O'Neill, The Human Mind's Imaginings: Conflict and Achievement in Shelley's Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

IT Karen Weisman, Imageless Truths: Shelley's Poetic Fictions (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, 1994).

KDT John Jones, John Keats's Dream of Truth (London: Chatto, 1969).

KH Nicholas Roe, ed. Keats and History (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

KLA Marjorie Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style. 1988. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

KSD Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971).

KSI Leon Waldoff, Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1985).

KPI Daniel P. Watkins, Keats's Poetry and the Politics of the Imagination (Toronto: Associated UP, 1989).

KP Stuart Sperry, Keats the Poet (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974).

KNA Andrew Bennett, Keats, Narrative and Audience (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

KSR Ronald A. Sharp, Keats, Skepticism, and the Religion of Beauty (Athens, GA: Georgia UP, 1979).

LC Peter Sacks, "'Last Clouds': A Reading of 'Adonais'," SiR 23 (1984): 379-400.

MM Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford UP, 1975).

MP Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy. 1982. Trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester, 1986).

N Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ. 4th ed. (NJ: Princeton UP, 1974).

NPA Julian Young, Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art. 1992. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

NP Clayton Koelb, ed. Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra. SUNY Contemporary Continental Philosophy Ser. (New York: New York UP, 1990).

NR Tilottama Rajan, ed. "Nietzsche and Romanticism," SiR 29 (1990).

NS M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (Oxford: Oxford, 1971).

NWS G. Kim Blank, ed. The New Shelley: Later Twentieth-Century Views (Macmillan: London, 1991).

OJK Helen Vendler, The Odes of John Keats (Harvard: Belknap, 1983).

PL Ronald Tetreault, The Poetry of Life: Shelley and the Literary Form (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1987).

PM Douglas Bush, ed. The Portable Milton. 1955. (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1977).

PPRM Patracia Waugh, Practising Postmodernism / Reading Modernism. 1992. Interrogating Texts Ser. London: Arnold, 1993.

PS Andrew J. Welburn, Power and Self-Consciousness in the Poetry of Shelley. Macmillan Studies in Romanticism. (London: Macmillan, 1986).

RCR — Duncan Wu, ed. Romanticism: A Critical Reader. 1995. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

RI — Jerome J. McGann, The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation (Chicago: Chicago, 1983).

RR — Paul de Man, The Rhetoric of Romanticism (New York: Columbia, 1984).

RPD — Kathleen M. Wheeler, Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

RS — Greg Kucich, Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1991).

RV — F.R. Leavis, Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry. 1936. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

SIE — Alan Weinberg, Shelley's Italian Experience. Macmillan Studies in Romanticism. (London: Macmillan, 1991).

SIV — Andelys Wood, "Shelley's Ironic Vision: The Witch of Atlas," Keats-Shelley Journal 19 (1980), 67-82.

SM — Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking. 1959. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1962).

SP — Jerrold E. Hogle, Shelley's Process: A Study in Psychological Transference (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

SRE — Kelvin Everest, ed. Shelley Revalued: Essays From the Gregynog Conference (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1983).

SR Tilottama Rajan, The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990).

SW Grant F. Scott, The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis, and the Visual Arts (Hanover, New England: New England UP, 1994).

Academic Journals:

ELH English Literary History.

MLN Modern Language Notes.

PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.

SiR Studies in Romanticism.

Preface

The writings of John Keats and P.B. Shelley have attracted an overwhelming variety of criticism. Studies of either one of these poets, or of the British Romantic movement as a whole, have naturally drawn comparisons and contrasts between their works. Few studies confine themselves to a comparative examination of Keats and Shelley, writing instead about the works of one or the other and tacitly reinforcing Leavis's segregation of an earthy Keats from an airy Shelley. The only notable exception is R.H. Fogle's painstaking study of The Imagery of Keats and Shelley (1949) which, nonetheless, finds Keatsian imagery full of richness and Shelley's poetry somewhat abstract.

This thesis offers a comparative examination of these two important second-generation Romantic poets and draws upon post-Romantic writings, particularly the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, to discuss their treatment of the self. Many significant cultural, historical, and generic differences exist between Nietzschean philosophy and the works of Keats and Shelley. Such differences are even more pronounced in light of Nietzsche's self-professed anti-romantic stance, which criticises Romanticism for impoverishing life by offering art as a redemptive shelter from a troubled world. Nietzsche's criticism of Romanticism gestures towards how his own emphasis on the aesthetic as life-affirming is shared by, and anticipated in, the works of Keats and Shelley. The overall intention of my thesis is to offer original readings of the

poetry and prose of Keats and Shelley, which are usefully illuminated by Nietzsche's views on the aesthetic and life. My own thinking about Nietzsche's understanding of self, art and life owes much to Alexander Nehemas's Nietzsche: Life as Literature (1985) and Julian Young's Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art (1992). Both of these philosophical studies explore Nietzsche's ideas concerning aesthetics in the broader context of his writings about metaphysics, eternal return, and the concept of the Overman [Übermensch]. With varying degrees of emphasis, Nehemas and Young consider a merging of life and literature central to Nietzsche's views of aesthetics and as an integral part of his interpretation of metaphysics and self as another mode of fiction. Daniel W. Conway's recent study of Nietzsche and the Political (1997) has acknowledged the significance of aesthetics for a process of self-creation, although his book is concerned mainly with Nietzsche's notions of moral perfectionism and the ascetic ideal. By contrast, the present thesis gives Nietzsche's ideas on aesthetics prominence over his writings on morality and ascetic ideals.

Nietzsche's understanding of the self as fictional is viewed, first, as being pre-empted by the writings of Keats and Shelley and, second, as central to modern constructions of Romanticism. My emphasis on the significance of Nietzschean philosophy points to an affinity this thesis shares with Tilottama Rajan's Dark Interpreter (1980). Rajan's book focuses on romantic discourse and uses Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy to provide a vocabulary for her deconstructive readings of major Romantic poems. For my part, I have drawn upon a variety of Nietzsche's

texts in order to incorporate the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic discussed by Rajan with his critique of Enlightenment metaphysics and concept of the Overman [Ubermensch]. Where possible, I have discussed the work of other commentators on Keats and Shelley, who have made comparisons and contrasts with Nietzsche's writings, or else employed his ideas for theoretical agendas, to emphasise how enmeshed his philosophy has become with Romantic criticism. I am sympathetic to Rajan's style of deconstruction which, like Ronald Tetreault's approach to Shelley in The Poetry of Life (1987), is insightful without ascribing to the text in question a blindness to its own effects, or making a de Manian claim to know a text better than itself.

My comparative readings of Keats and Shelley are arranged into chapters according to genre: their prose writings about self and aesthetics; their early poetic use of romance; their transgressive and tragic lyrics; Shelley's elegy for Keats; and, finally, their Romantic fragment poems. These genres were selected because they contained widely known works by Keats and Shelley. By re-examining these familiar works in the light of Nietzschean philosophy, fresh critical insights are gained and the affinities between Keats and Shelley foregrounded.

My thesis excludes the dramatic works of Keats and Shelley. Such an exclusion is made, partly, because I believe that a consideration of Keats's theatrical endeavours and Shelley's extensive dramatic works would be better served by inclusion in a larger critical project than the present one. More importantly, the dramas of Keats and Shelley have

received excellent critical attention in recent years. Keats's experimentation with the dramatic mode recieves its most sympathetic defence in Charles J. Rzepka's The Self as Mind (1986). Rzepka uses Otho the Great as a basis for suggesting that Keats's poetical and prose works are preoccupied with the staging and dramatic framing of the events they portray. Keats is viewed as a credible dramatist, because all of his writings are imbued with a sense of the dramatic. Shelley's critics have successfully connected his dramatic undertakings with the concerns of Nietzschean philosophy. Jerrold E. Hogle's study of Shelley's Process (1988) reads Prometheus Unbound in terms of Nietzsche's concept of the will and Ross Woodman explores Shelley's lyrical drama as a Nietzschean conflict between the metaphysical and metaphorical modes (Studies in Romanticism, 1990). In a recent work on Revenge Tragedy (1996), John Kerrigan has suggested that Shelley's The Cenci foreshadows Nietzsche's announcement of an ethical revolution in Beyond Good and Evil and On the Genealogy of Morals.

Chapter One of my thesis surveys a spectrum of Romantic literary criticism. Both aesthetic and theoretical readings of Keats and Shelley are shown either to have drawn parallels between their works and Nietzsche's philosophy or (particularly in the case of de Man and deconstructionists after him) to have employed certain Nietzschean critical practices and concepts. Even Jerome J. McGann's New Historical method draws upon Nietzschean philosophy and shares certain affinities with the critical practices of deconstruction. Nietzsche's

philosophy is shown to have become an integral part of Romantic literary criticism. In the course of establishing Nietzsche's significance for literary criticism, this chapter outlines his critique of metaphysics, his views on art, his understanding of the lyric poet, his concept of the Overman [Übermensch], and his account of the self as fictional. These key concepts are returned to in subsequent chapters and used to enrich comparative readings of the poetry and prose of Keats and Shelley.

A reading of Shelley's A Defence of Poetry and Keats's Letters is offered in Chapter Two. The prose writings of Keats and Shelley are regarded as anticipating Nietzsche's own emphasis on self-invention, the metaphorical nature of language, and distrust of metaphysics. I suggest that Shelley's A Defence of Poetry regards poetry as a discourse which subordinates all systems of signs under the banner of poetic language, thus liberating the self from dogmatic certainty and reductive rationalism, permitting a continual process of metaphorical self-revision. These key ideas in A Defence of Poetry are paralleled with Keats's view of the self as fictional and his own distrust of metaphysical reasoning. Keats's concepts of "Negative Capability" and the "Vale of Soul-making" are shown to invest in a similar process of self-revision. The prose writings of Keats and Shelley anticipate Nietzsche's ideas about fiction as a mode of knowing.

Chapter Three considers romance as a genre which was attractive to the young Keats and Shelley, who were sceptical about Wordsworth's consolatory fictions and wanted to experiment with fictions of self-invention. A comparative reading of Keats's Endymion and Shelley's Alastor shows how Keats and Shelley probe the darker depths of the romance world, with its apparent surface of light and harmony. This oscillation between tragic suffering and bliss in Alastor and Endymion is considered in terms of Nietzsche's understanding of the Apollonian and Dionysian dynamic in The Birth of Tragedy. Keats and Shelley are regarded as inventing a strategy of negative, yet affirming, fictions to confront the tragic suffering and absence that they unearth beneath romance's illusions.

In Chapter Four, the lyric is presented as a transgressive genre, which is suited to further explorations of the tragic awareness that Keats and Shelley realised in their romances. The major lyrical poetry of Keats and Shelley is understood as confronting the limitations of language, art and existence. I contend that the scepticism of Keats's "Ode to Psyche" and Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" is developed into a joyous affirmation of tragedy, celebrated in "To Autumn" and "Ode to West Wind" respectively. The role of the lyric poet to affirm life even in the face of tragedy and loss is discussed in terms of Nietzsche's later view of the Dionysian category in Twilight of the Idols. These confrontations with the limitations of language, art and

existence are viewed as testifying to the poetic power of Keatsian and Shelleyan fiction-making.

Focusing on Adonais, Chapter Five examines how Shelley comes to terms with Keats's death and the possibility of his own future extinction. Adonais, I suggest, takes up a relationship with history and biography through Shelley's initiation of a process of forgetting which, ultimately, leads to a remembering of what is repressed. Shelley's treatment of history, biography, and forgetting is compared with Nietzsche's meditation On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life. Shelley remoulds Keats's poetic character and the circumstances surrounding his death to ensure that Keats and Adonais attain a posthumous existence. Their immortality, I argue, is only possible because of Adonais's poetic logic which incorporates the temporal into the eternal. Shelley redeems Keats and Adonais only at his own expense; he is orientated by the poetic logic of Adonais towards a confrontation with his own death.

The final chapter offers a comparative reading of Keats's "Hyperion" fragments and Shelley's incomplete The Triumph of Life. These Romantic fragment poems with their abrupt endings implicate the reader in the process of self-invention, explored by Keats and Shelley in their other works. The processes of self-invention at work in these fragment poems are viewed both as exemplifying Nietzsche's concept of becoming and as offering a critique of Enlightenment ideas about history and the self. These fragment poems promote the necessity of grasping a double truth,

which affirms joy and suffering; they signpost the way towards attaining the perspective of Nietzsche's Overman [Übermensch]. The fragmented state of Keats's "Hyperion" poems and Shelley's The Triumph of Life, I contend, place a responsibility on the reader to countersign the poetic identities of Keats and Shelley. To countersign these fragments is to participate in a process of becoming and an affirmative Nietzschean "yes" saying, which will ensure the posthumous reputations of Keats and Shelley as writers.

Chapter 1

Using and Abusing Nietzschean Concepts in the Criticism of Keats and Shelley

> ...[T]here seems to be no better way to interpret the movement than by understanding the misunderstandings it created among its interpreters.'
>
> (Paul de Man)

Many important historical, cultural, and generic differences separate the writings of Keats, Shelley and Nietzsche, but these have not deterred scholars from establishing parallels between them. Even critics without explicit theoretical agendas have traced significant similarities between the texts of Keats, Shelley and Nietzsche. Theoretical accounts have gone beyond charting parallels to draw upon Nietzschean philosophy as a source for critical practices and appropriate vocabulary. The critical reception of Keats and Shelley has been equally varied although, since F.R. Leavis's heyday, marked differences have existed between the nature of literary criticism that their individual bodies of work have received. Leavis persistently complains, after Matthew Arnold[2], about the failure of Shelleyan imagery "to grasp something real"[3], and in contrast, praises Keatsian language for its "strong grasp upon actualities" and its "sense of the solid world" (RV, 261). More importantly, Leavis's praise established the long-standing critical perception of Keats as an aesthete--preoccupied

with the contemplation of Greek artefacts, literature, and paintings (RV, 257)--and rendered Shelley "'almost unreadable'" (RV, 231).

Leavis's ghost still haunts criticism of the works of Keats and Shelley. The majority of critical approaches to Keats have tended to support Leavis's myth of Keats as an aesthete by focusing on the self-transcendent implications of the beauty-truth identification, as in Earl R. Wasserman's The Finer Tone, or John Jones's study[4] of the Keatsian struggle to come to terms with the co-existence of suffering and beauty, through a working out of this problematic relation in the poetry of "snail-horn perception" (KDT, 105-27). One of the more recent Harvard Keatsians, Helen Vendler--in the wake of the criticism of Lionel Trilling, John Bayley, and Christopher Ricks--has reinforced Keats's image as an aesthete, adopting a critical methodology of inter-textuality, which discovers endless internal connections between the odes. Vendler's approach offers, as Wasserman's account so often readily does, a totalising retelling of how "each ode is generated out of previous odes"[5] and she identifies in the sequence of Keats's odes "his own predicament as an artist" (OJK, 13). Such aesthetic readings of Keats are highly sophisticated, subtle and illuminating, but, as Morris Dickstein has observed[6], they do tend to separate Keats from the general Romantic Movement, including Shelley his contemporary who was, like Byron, a major literary figure of second-generation British Romanticism. This separation--if not alienation--of Keats and Shelley from one another has been further exacerbated by the different kinds of critical practice their literary works have attracted. Keatsian criticism often encompasses philosophic, linguistic, and political issues by persistently framing them in, or even out of, artistic and poetical frameworks, so that they are rendered subordinate to a series of aesthetic inter-relations for their

significance. Conversely, Shelley's work has produced a more esoteric body of criticism still haunted by Leavis's utterances about abstract "unreadability". These theoretical approaches include deconstructive readings by Paul de Man, Harold Bloom's version of Shelley as a "mythopoeic" poet[7] and Ross Woodman's study of the apocalyptic in Shelley's poetry[8]. Psychological investigations into Shelley's work have been conducted by Jerrold E. Hogle's emphasis on "transference"[9], Peter Sacks's study of grief in Adonais[10] and Thomas Weiskel's Lacanian account of Alastor.[11]

Shelley's work has never been confined to the aesthetic, because the aesthetics of Shelley's poetry have been read through a complex critical and philosophical lens. Ironically, theoretical Shelleyan criticism often reveals traces of Leavis's influence. Latent in Weiskel's Lacanian readings are traces of a morally repugnant egotistical narcissism; in Hogle's Shelley's Process the criticism borders on the didactic by moralising about Shelley's "self-regarding" (RV, 220) heroic role in his poetry.[12] Even de Manian deconstruction echoes a Leavisian notion of "unreadability", formulating Shelley's The Triumph of Life as an extension of a Bloomian misprision, disclosing "reading as disfiguration".[13]

Certainly, the recurrence of process as an issue in these critical studies is partly explained by the Romantic obsession with the incomplete, on-going nature of writing and reading. It is also explained by similar concerns, inherent in Nietzschean philosophy, which underlie many methods of criticism of Romantic poetry. Critics have established links between Nietzschean philosophy and Romantic writings in one of two ways: either the preoccupation with self-invention in Romantic texts is viewed as a precursor to the concerns of Nietzschean philosophy, or Nietzsche's

fictionalising of the self and world is used to measure Romantic concerns with the nature of self, world and aesthetics. Few Romantic scholars who employ either of these approaches will readily concede a Nietzschean influence on their critical perspectives, or consider Romantic and Nietzschean texts alongside one another. This comparative exploration of self-invention in the works of Keats and Shelley admits to a Nietzschean influence on its critical practices and makes explicit connections between the writings of Keats, Shelley and Nietzsche.

Exploiting the inconsistencies of rational metaphysics, Nietzsche establishes the principles of a de Manian approach to literature. Nietzsche's analysis of an Enlightenment "will to truth", Reason, and a progressive improvement of humanity extends beyond a logical attack on the movement's essential premisses to a deconstructive examination of what has been excluded, denied, and repressed by rationalism. This critique of Enlightenment values persistently focuses on what has been repressed by Kantian metaphysics and highlights the internal weaknesses of this rationalist system:

> What really is it in us that wants 'the truth'? We did indeed pause for a long time before the question of the origin of this will--until finally we came to a complete halt before an even more fundamental question. We asked after the value of this will. Granted we want truth: why not rather untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance? (BGE, 33)

The Enlightenment "will to truth" (BGE, 33) represses the notion of "untruth as a condition of life" (BGE, 36), failing to account for the

possibility that its belief in the rational may in itself be the product of an error. Reason wrongly locates the origin of the Good and Beautiful in a divine and transcendental realm. Kant's a priori categories of the mind and their correspondence with the Ideals of the Good, Beauty, and Reason secured an individual's ability to gain "true" knowledge of the phenomenal world, without considering a "truth" or "fact" to be only one possible interpretation of the universe out of many. Metaphysicians, according to Nietzsche, asserted their fictional perspective as actual and universal, confusing their fabrication of the world with the world's real state of affairs:

> Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the 'real' world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being. (WP, 3, 3, 507)

A world of being is rooted in the mistaken metaphysical assumption that to possess the ability to name the elements of the phenomenal world, through language, is identical to having knowledge of what is observed. Metaphysical language is not permitted to produce a multiplicity of meanings, but forced to bear testament to a world of being, underpinned by a fixed meaning, absolute ideals, and certain knowledge of the observed object:

> The sculptor of language was not so modest as to believe that he was only giving things designations, he conceived rather that with words he was expressing supreme knowledge of things... (HH, 16)

Language or logic "depends upon presuppositions with which nothing in the real world corresponds" (HH, 16). For Nietzsche, the act of naming a thing is not to attain knowledge of its essence, but to give birth to the notion of that particular thing as a concept. For Nietzsche, words and symbols are no more an integral part of the essence of the phenomenal world than the concepts they create; freed from the constraints of a metaphysical system, they serve as partial signposts to new understandings and interpretations of reality:

> We set up a word at the point at which our ignorance begins, at which we can see no further, eg., the word 'I,' the word 'do,' the word 'suffer':--these are perhaps the horizon of our knowledge, but not the 'truths'. (WP, 3, 3, 482)

To deconstruct the metaphysical is not for Nietzsche to reject it. Even his critique of metaphysics and its totalising explanations of the universe is preoccupied with viewing metaphysical absolutes as one way of interpreting life. Metaphysics is no more or less valid than any other interpretation of the universe, since all explanations--even those of logic and science--are only necessary interpretative fictions of reality:

> ...[T]hat physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world...and not an explanation of the world...

> ...[T]hat without granting as true the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a continual falsific-

> ation of the world by means of numbers, mankind could not live...
>
> (BGE, 44; 35)

Reality is no longer founded upon an absolute metaphysical cornerstone, but partly uncovered and partly invented by a series of competing fictions, which attempt to interpret reality and negotiate humanity's position in the universe. Consequently, a totalising view of reality is impossible since these competing interpretations are only capable of portraying a fragmented reality, glimpsed through their particular conceptual windows. Metaphysics is displaced by the fragmented fictions of the metaphorical:

> 'You shall learn to grasp the sense of perspective in every value judgement--the distortion and merely apparent teleology of horizons and whatever else pertains to perspectivism...'
>
> (HH, Preface, 9)

Effectively, Nietzsche has deconstructed the metaphysical "will to truth" and unity to reveal that underlying its claims to absolute truth and certainty of knowledge is a repression of the necessary "condition of untruth". Through the loss of these metaphysical certainties an individual's own self-knowledge is subject to the processes of excavation and invention, as is the nature of reality. A Nietzschean critique of the transcendental realm of metaphysical systems permits an exploration of self so that individuals can become the "adventurers and circumnavigators of that inner world called 'man'" (HH, Preface, 10):

> The subject: this is the term for our belief in a unity

underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality: we understand this belief as the effect of one cause--we believe so firmly in our belief that for its sake we imagine 'truth', 'reality', 'substantiality' in general. --The subject is the fiction

> that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the 'similarity' of these states. (WP, 3, 3, 485)

By doubting a subject's autonomy and unity, Nietzsche is able to free an individual's sense of self from the shackles of a transcendental reality. Enlightenment's apparent impulse to unity produces a dualistic understanding of the self, in which the rational mind aspires to a metaphysical and supersensible realm of Reason, yet is constantly hindered by the base and sensuous desires of the body. Nietzsche's aligning of the pursuit of Reason with the "will to truth" ends the division of the intellect from other bodily desires, as it acknowledges the thirst for knowledge as one of many of the appetites of the body--the Nietzschean "will to power" combines action and thought, intellect and desire, mind and body--as in "every act of will there is a commanding thought-- and do not imagine that this thought can be separated from the 'willing'" (BGE, 48). Nietzsche's emphasis on the inextricability of an author from his or her work, sharply distinguishes his own thinking from those deconstructionists who celebrate Nietzsche as a proto-deconstructionist and claim that his critique of onto-theology initiated the end of authorial intention.[14] A Nietzschean critique of metaphysics unearths a repressed "will to power" present in its formulation of the "will to truth" and its subsequent

evaluation of morality. The "will to truth" appears to advocate a divine transcendental realm of Reason and the Good, when in fact, it desires the subjection of reality to its rationalist system, along with the subscription of its disciples to a rationalist account of the universe:

> Will to the conceivability of all being: that is what I call your will!
>
> ...But it must bend and accommodate itself to you! Thus will your will have it. It must become smooth and subject to the mind as the mind's mirror and reflection.
>
> This is your entire will...it is a will to power; and that is so even when you talk of good and evil and of the assessment of values. (Z, 136)

Nietzsche's acute awareness of the creative and metaphorical nature of language--even that employed by metaphysics--liberates the self's perception of reality and the self's understanding of itself through an extreme awareness of the fictionality of any particular linguistic construction of a self and its perspective on and relation to reality. The self is no longer a fixed and divided part of the metaphysical world of being, but one of many processes that are a part of an eternal universe involved in the act of "becoming". The universe and the self's relation to it are not to be constructed through a single fiction; rather, they are constructed and invented by numerous competing fictions, which must continually invent and re-invent both the universe and the self. The nature of reality and the self must partly be unburied and partly invented, as the process of "becoming" is centred on the paradoxical task of "<u>how one</u>

becomes what one is" (EH, 64). An act of "becoming" necessitates the perpetual invention of these fictions to avoid a hardening of a fictive construction of the self and reality into metaphysical dogma. Consequently, "what one is" will be inextricable from the process of "becoming"; it will not be a fixed state at which the individual self must arrive, as if driven by a metaphysical telos:

> [M]an is a bridge and not a goal; counting himself happy for his noontides and evenings, as a way to new dawns...
>
> A dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still. (Z, 215; 43)

Crucial to the Nietzschean process of "how one becomes what one is", involving the act of self-construction and self-definition in and through fiction, is the self's struggle to fashion a social, political, and literary identity that might cast light upon its true nature and relation to reality. The centrality of the self as a constantly revisable script to Nietzsche's philosophy is of equal importance to the treatment of aesthetic self-construction in the works of Keats and Shelley; the critical lenses these poets have been viewed through are often indebted to Nietzsche (as in particular the work of de Man, Rajan, and Woodman); and more in spite of generic and historical differences, the poetical concerns of Keats and Shelley anticipate Nietzsche's philosophical treatment of the self.

Throughout Nietzsche's philosophical works there is a persistent awareness of Nietzsche the author which extends beyond his engagement in

penning his manuscripts to an active involvement in the writing and re-writing of his own self-identity. Nietzsche exploits the autobiographical genre in Ecce Homo through a blending of literary fiction and historical fact, so that he can fashion a literary identity approximating the Overman [Übermensch], shaping himself as a Dionysian individual who knows and embraces his fate, whose coming was foretold by Zarathustra the prophet of the noontide, Nietzsche's own literary re-invention of a historical figure (EH, 126-7). Mirroring this blurring of fiction and fact, Nietzsche's autobiographical account is at once retrospective and forward-looking: Ecce Homo is a recollected account of an individual who prophesied an end to the Enlightenment project throughout his life and work.

Consequently, Nietzsche's life and work are deliberately collapsed into one another by the collection of the later stages of his career under the chronological sequence of the titles of his publications; the process of self-revision occurring both from within, in the form of a reappraisal of his past works and fictional identities, and from without, as these revisionary accounts of past events and works produce a re-writing of the self and a new literary work in the form of Ecce Homo. The close of Ecce Homo stresses a return to Nietzsche as an author who, simultaneously, pens a literal manuscript that revises other manuscripts and a metaphorical writing and re-writing of the self. Both kinds of manuscripts, whether by Nietzsche or other readers, will inevitably be subject to re-invention and re-interpretation, so it is fitting that the final line asserts Nietzsche's fictionalisation of the self in hand with the endless potential for numerous constructions, readings, and writings of the "I":

--Have I been understood?--Dionysos against the Crucified...

(EH, 134)

Nietzsche's philosophical and literary treatment of the self, through a constant interpenetration of life and literature, exploits and underlines the fictive nature of an individual's concept of self to such an extreme degree that everyone becomes an artist engaged in the weaving of complex fictions to forge a new self, "[h]e is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art" (BT, 37). Certainly, this is the case in Nietzsche's literary practice of signing his initials at the beginning of Ecce Homo only to re-cast, displace and defer whatever fictional construction of self is implicated in this act throughout the text, or his creation of Zarathustra as his mouth-piece, or even Nietzsche's explicit "attempt at a self-criticism" in the 1886 edition of The Birth of Tragedy, a critique of his first major work and his earlier constructed self. The conflict between the signature and the signatory in the process of self-construction (or the steady fiction of an adopted mask and the evolving fictions of a "becoming" self) and the gap created by Nietzsche's protest that The Birth of Tragedy "should be treated with some consideration and taciturnity" (BT, 19). Nietzsche is, in fact, actively writing a critique of his own work to disclose such a fictive space. This space will permit the continued fashioning of a self, so that an individual is at once master artist and an incompleted artistic project. In many respects Nietzsche's profound self-awareness of a self as a fictional construct in his literary work and life, in spite of his anti-romanticism, identifies him with the magical being he understands the lyric poet to be:

> ...[L]ike the weird image of the fairy tale which can turn its eyes at will and behold itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator. (BT, 52)

Nietzschean philosophy turns out to have a double fascination for the literary critic of Romanticism. On one hand, it offers a useful deconstructive approach with which to analyse apparently closed systems or texts--without the premature death of the author or reader--and, on the other, it offers a much-needed vocabulary to discuss Romanticism's own extreme self-awareness of the "I" as a fictional construct and the movement's subsequent obsession with the processes involved in the construction of a literary work and identity. Critical perceptions of Romanticism, whether conscious of it or not, are indebted to the terms and concepts of Nietzschean philosophy, to an extent which is often underestimated.

Even M.H. Abrams's study of Romanticism's reappropriation of religious redemptive patterns to a secularised arena finds, in Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy, a model for his own pattern of "a fall from primal unity into self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict as...[a]...first step along the way toward a higher unity...".[15] The Apollonian-Dionysian duality is adopted by Abrams to describe the psychic conflict between the harmonious and the chaotic, so that individual redemption is only possible by the unification of these contradictory states, which brings an end to humanity's alienation from nature and produces "the consummation of all things" (NS, 318). Tilottama Rajan's more sophisticated theoretical account of Romanticism (although primarily concerned with the movement's deconstruction of its own idealist aesthetics) shares a similar interest

with Abrams in the dialectical "process of constant self-negation to generate a momentum toward synthesis"[16], and imports Nietzschean terminology to inform her critical discussion:

> ...Nietzsche...can provide us with a vocabulary with which to interpret a wide variety of Romantic poems, considered as allegories of the aesthetic act and the operations it performs (DI, 20)

Rajan's first deconstructive study of Romanticism is mostly dependent upon The Birth of Tragedy for its Nietzschean vocabulary; borrowing its dual understanding of art as a "bright image of clouds and sky mirrored in a black lake of sadness" (BT, 70), she excavates the duality of Romantic consciousness to disclose that "[t]he darker elements in Romantic works are not a part of their organic unity" (DI, 19).

Consequently, Rajan is able to depict Keats as a poet who during the course of his career moves away from Apollonian idealism towards a more tragic and Dionysian concept of art, occupying a "space of...discontinuity between the real and the ideal, between the empty verbal sign and the thing it evokes..." (DI, 107). Keats, for Rajan, finally arrives "[o]n the [t]hreshold of [t]ragedy" (DI, 97) in his late romances without taking account of the tragic sensibility present in Keats's earlier romance, Endymion. Rajan's reading confines Keats to the aesthetic sphere, in which he is only capable of the incestuous act of representing "the nature of aesthetic representation" (DI, 111), and forever unable to realise his own fiction, because "to make this fiction real might be to destroy altogether the fragile foundation of illusion on which it rests" (DI, 115).

Shelley's poetry is for Rajan similarly constructed in terms of an Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic, as she finds that "Shelley's poetic theory is not self-conscious enough to provide us with an explicit terminology in which to discuss his poetry" (DI, 73). What emerges is a Shelley capable of a complex sceptical idealism, expressed through the image of the transforming mirror in A Defence of Poetry, and read by Rajan as "yet another attempt to submerge Dionysus in Apollo, and to silence an inevitable dialogue between the veil of language and the knowledge of life" (DI, 74). Shelley's mature works, like Keats's later poetry, are confined to an exploration of art as "the reconstruction of appearances as well as the disclosure of the Dionysiac knowledge that lies behind them" (DI, 70). The works of Shelley, in Rajan's critical investigation, are at least comparable to those of Keats, though the price for the comparison is a less political Shelley and a highly aestheticised Keats, who truly belongs amongst the exhibits of Marjorie Levinson's "museum space".[17]

The roots of this aestheticised construction of Keats and Shelley--and wider Romantic discourse--are, of course, in Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy, or what Rajan refers to as "Nietzsche's aesthetic theory" (DI, 29), a label that is both restrictive and inaccurate. After all, Nietzsche never proclaimed a comprehensive aesthetic theory and was subsequently at pains to criticise his own study of Greek culture and its use of tragedy. Niether does Rajan's focus on The Birth of Tragedy allow her account to emphasise fully how inextricable the Apollonian and Dionysian categories were for Nietzsche nor how by 1888, in The Twilight of the Idols, the Dionysian category had been expanded to incorporate the Apollonian. Certainly, a curious irony occurs when a deconstructionist critic wishes to totalise Nietzsche's views of aesthetics under a single banner. More

importantly, Nietzsche's philosophy extends beyond a simple theory of aesthetics to a radical aestheticisation of self and reality, which permits their writing and re-writing through the invention and disclosure of fictions.

The myth of a single Nietzschean aesthetic theory has been perpetuated by critical efforts, often dependent upon the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic, to chart the duality of Romantic consciousness and experience. By subscribing to this myth Rajan was most obviously following in the footsteps of Ross Woodman's apocalyptic study of Shelley's poetry and Abrams's Natural Supernaturalism. Equally, de Manian readings of Romanticism contributed to the rise of this myth by the infiltration of Nietzschean concepts into literary and aesthetic discussions of other Romantic commentators. Paul Privateer has observed that these "two forms of romantic literary criticism" employ Nietzsche differently; on one hand, "Abrams accepts the notion of a textually representative romantic self" and, on the other, de Man questions the possibility of "self-reference and authority".[18]

The process of de Manian effacement--in which the act of affirming the self through a figural "I" produces its immediate erasure--is indebted to a conflict between Apollo and Dionysus. In Nietzschean terms, the attempted affirmation of the "I" draws on the Apollonian "delimiting [of] the boundaries of the individual" and a desire for "self-knowledge" (BT, 46); its erasure draws on the Dionysian state in which "everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness" (BT, 36).

Those critics who have followed in the wake of de Man have contributed to this conspiracy and unwittingly smuggled Nietzschean concepts into Romantic criticism. Andrew Bennett's study of the "anxiety of audience"[19]

in Keats's poetry is rooted in two de Manian concepts; explicitly that the "allegory of reading narrates the impossibility of reading" (ALR, 77) and, more implicitly, that "[d]eath is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament, and the restoration of mortality by autobiography (the prosopopoeia of the voice and the name)" (RR, 81). Bennett's account has shifted emphasis away from the author to the figure of the reader, but his study is unmistakably de Manian in origin. A desire to be a poem's audience only heightens a reader's sense of being a non-audience; consequently, reading can only ever result in its own impossibility. This collapse of the reader's attempted affirmation as textual audience into non-audience can be traced back to a de Manian erasure of the "I", which itself echoes Nietzsche's Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic.[20]

Equally, Hogle's study of process in Shelley's poetry assents to this critical conspiracy. Although Hogle's critical account focuses on Shelley's preoccupation with figuring and recovering a lost or repressed origin, the study is more concerned with the fabrication of the self through a social context (SP, 15;16). This criticism, overtly, brings into play a Marxist understanding of "transformation" and a Freudian sense of "transference" to discuss the decentred centre in Shelley's work:

> Perhaps the newer readings closest to my view are the ones that have announced themselves as more truly "deconstructive" than any Bloomian would want to be [...] Even so, and despite my debts to them, I do not find the American deconstructionists to be much more accurate in their sense of Shelley than the more traditional and "centred" interpreters of his work. (SP, 22; 23)

Nonetheless, Hogle's reading of a Shelleyan impulse toward the poetic act of writing draws explicitly on de Man and Nietzsche. He understands Shelley's work, at moments, as exhibiting a "Nietzschean foresight" in how it "generates a guiding or 'ruling thought' that sets the direction for the self-overcoming always attempted by a complex feeling and desire" (SP, 105). Such a notion relies upon Nietzsche's understanding of truth as a "mobile army of metaphors", an idea which was also taken up by de Man (RR, 239), and views Shelley's poetry as reasserting "the continual and self-overcoming interaction between ever-changeable language and its self-transforming speakers" (SP, 109). Consequently, Shelley's weaving of metaphors and figures is read as an act of supplementation through which "the movement that underlies all figuration...becomes visible only in figures" (SP, 19). Shelley can be construed in these epistemological terms, since his poetry has recourse to a fictive metaphysical supplement of reality. Similarly, Levinson sees the allegorical life of Keats's poetry as a supplement to the social, financial, and sexual frustrations which he encountered in actual life; conversely, Rajan gives a recent account of reading as a supplementary act, which supplements Romantic writing and exposes its textual lack.[21] Critical perception and understanding of the supplement have principally been fashioned by de Man and Jacques Derrida[22], but the seeds of this critical tool are sown in Nietzsche's understanding of art's function:

> [A]rt is not merely an imitation of the reality of nature but rather a metaphysical supplement of the reality of nature, placed beside it for its overcoming. (BT, 140)

Unsurprisingly, Shelleyan criticism--which has a longer standing tradition of theoretical approaches than studies of Keats--most obviously reveals a dissemination of Nietzschean concepts, from Nietzsche's own work and through de Man's, into deconstructive accounts of Romanticism. More significantly, the Shelley-Nietzsche connection is still current in recent critical debate. Rajan, in The Supplement of Reading, returns to the subject of A Defence of Poetry and Nietzsche; constructing the text as a potential "precursor of a Nietzschean and phenomenological deconstruction" (SR, 289), using other Nietzschean works besides The Birth of Tragedy, including The Wanderer and His Shadow and "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultra-Moral Sense." Both Shelley and Nietzsche share the understanding that "language is vitally metaphorical" (SPP, 482) equally capable of concealing and revealing the nature of reality.

Kathleen M. Wheeler, in her discussion of "Shelley and Nietzsche: 'Reality' as Rhetoric", takes her critical point of departure from Rajan's observations about Shelley's A Defence of Poetry and Nietzsche's views of language, truth, and reality. Wheeler places A Defence of Poetry in a much wider philosophic context, encompassing Dewey, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, viewing the work as "a thoroughgoing rejection of dualistic thinking as exemplified by much Western philosophy (or at least interpretations of Western philosophy)".[23] Shelley and Nietzsche are alike in their rejection of the substance or a thing-in-itself and recognition that reality is dependent upon rhetoric, rooted in the conviction that "both mind and world are figures of speech, neither having priority over the other" (RPD, 13). Wheeler offers the most fully Nietzschean account of Shelley; she stresses the importance of actively constructing the figures of "mind" and "body" from the "radically metaphorical fabric of experience"

(RPD, 14), and she acknowledges Nietzsche's important relevance for critical and literary approaches, especially of The Will to Power:

> These notebooks are some of the most relevant of Nietzsche's works for readers today, as they address themselves to issues which have become dominant in late-twentieth-century literary theory, and for some philosophers as well. (RPD, 15)

Wheeler is certainly right to assert Nietzsche's significance, although Nietzsche's relevance for the dominant strands of current literary theory is a direct consequence of his latent influence upon theoretical criticism in the past. In spite of this tangled link between Nietzschean philosophy and Romantic criticism, Wheeler warily segregates Shelley from Nietzsche, discussing both their place in Western Philosophy and their philosophic similarities in separate sections. In this respect Wheeler subscribes to Rajan's caution, which served as her critical point of departure, that Shelley's Defence is only a potential "precursor of a Nietzschean...deconstruction", and is careful to avoid imposing a retrospective teleological framework on the history of ideas.

Wheeler's approach is critically prudent. Yet a close textual examination of A Defence of Poetry, explicitly aware of the Nietzschean influences at work in its own methodology, might have produced a reading sensitive to the intellectual relation between Shelley and Nietzsche, as well as to Nietzsche's influence upon Romantic criticism. Nietzschean philosophy has played a significant part in shaping deconstruction, and Romantic Literature--often characterised by social, political, and aesthetic non-conformity--has been especially susceptible to the

experimentations of this critical movement. Accounts of Romanticism by Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and Harold Bloom have dominated the Yale deconstructive school.[24]

This debt to Nietzschean philosophy has not gone entirely unnoticed by those currently engaged in Romantic criticism, particularly with the appearance, in Spring 1990, of a Studies in Romanticism dedicated to the subject of "Nietzsche and Romanticism" and introduced by Tilottama Rajan. By taking as read Nietzsche's implicit place amongst Romantic studies, Rajan's introduction highlights a general rift between more theoretical American and Canadian representations of Romanticism and British aesthetic and social readings. Harvey Birenbaum's recent study of Blake testifies to American acceptance of Nietzsche's place in Romantic scholarship. Birenbaum's Between Blake and Nietzsche explores how myth extends beyond being a figure and is, in fact, a way of being which presents a version of reality.[25] Blake and Nietzsche are regarded as both involved in "'the revaluation of all values'" (BBN, 4) and a "war on language within and through language" (BBN, 6). Birenbaum compares Blakean and Nietzschean texts in light of their use of prosopopeia and shared views about self-overcoming (BBN, 8; 6). Theoretical studies--like those by Bennett and Wheeler--go some way towards redressing the balance on this side of the Atlantic, but they do not derive from a British view of Nietzsche as a "canonical" figure in the mechanics of critical representations of Romanticism:

> But now that the revision of romanticism through Nietzsche has become almost canonical, it is appropriate to ask whether Nietzsche should not be revisioned through 'romant-

icism'.[26]

Rajan is prepared to revise Nietzsche, in the light of Romanticism, before British Romantic studies have wholly established the relevant relations between Nietzschean philosophy and Romantic poetry. In trying to establish a fruitful dialogue between Nietzsche and Romanticism American and Canadian Romantic studies have their own problems; they often tend to subsume Nietzschean philosophy into their deconstructive practices, without considering Romantic writings and Nietzsche's works alongside one another. In this respect, American and Canadian Romantic critics might take their lead from Wheeler's inter-textual account of Shelley and Nietzsche. Many of the essays in Rajan's forum on Nietzsche and Romanticism bear witness to the absorption of Nietzsche into deconstructive practices and the difficulty of separating Nietzsche from de Manian deconstruction. Henry Staten's reconstruction of The Birth of Tragedy inevitably involves a dismantling of de Man's reading of Nietzsche through "a series of bipolar oppositions", which allowed him to submit the text "to a canonical process of deconstruction" (NR, 12). William Walker's exploration of Nietzsche's affinities with Enlightenment empiricists produces a diagnosis of the inter-relation between de Man and Nietzsche: "Nietzsche's writing on trope and concept, particularly as it is explicated by de Man, is a strong text within contemporary studies in romanticism" (NR, 65). Such verdicts are supported by Woodman's account of the "metaphorical body" in the works of Blake, Keats, and Shelley, which betrays explicit Nietzschean and de Manian traces in its handling of "the difficulty faced by the poet's own effaced body in finding a metaphorical shape" (NR, 7). Consequently, Nietzsche, whether by theoretical design or later, accidental, critical absorption has

come to occupy a central place amongst much Romantic criticism and will prove no less difficult to exorcise than Leavis's spectre.

Deconstructionist approaches did not passively inherit Nietzschean terms and concepts from de Manian criticism. Instead they actively sought a less conservative and more radical interpretation of literature and Nietzsche. Deconstruction's emphasis on the processes of writing and reading within Romantic literature has produced destabilising accounts of texts and ensured a decisive break with structuralist or formalist criticism. Paradoxically, de Man's critical accounts of endless tropes and effacement are underpinned by some sense of a metaphysical value system, a personal belief which prevents him from giving truth up to an extreme Nietzschean fictionality and credibility:

> Nietzsche is not simply saying, as de Man suggests, that truth is mere figure. Under the guise of reducing truth to illusion/metaphor, he also argues for the truth of metaphor as a relational, diacritical mode of understanding that constantly displaces itself...[27]

De Man's portrayal of Nietzsche as a post-structuralist limits the meaning and full implications of Nietzsche's work by a conservative reduction of truth as radical fiction to a mere "figure". In the final analysis, de Manian deconstruction, unwittingly, preserved its own logocentric beliefs. Ironically, it is Nietzsche's preservation of "romantic categories such as metaphor, myth, symbol..., figure" (DPS, 467) and authorial subject which points to de Man's critical abuse of Nietzsche's writings to invent his own brand of deconstruction.

These deconstructive approaches to Romantic literature have not gone unchallenged, encountering their most sophisticated critical adversary in New Historicism. Jerome McGann, for one, sharply defines himself against deconstructionist and phenomenological approaches to Romanticism. On the grounds that characterising its literature "as a 'poetry of process'...cannot serve to distinguish the literary phenomena of Romanticism".[28] To define the "Romantic Period as one marked by an 'epistemological crisis'" is only for McGann to follow Romanticism's own "definition of its historical problems" (RI, 71). In McGann's view, criticism's foregrounding of the processes of writing and reading, along with the attention given to the self in these processes, has obscured the socio-historical circumstances surrounding the creation and circulation of Romantic literature. Romantic commentators' inability to "pass through those Romantic forms of thought" (RI, 71) have trapped them in a circular critical procedure, in which the romantic nature of their own criticism inevitably leads them to focus on issues of process and epistemological crisis, rather than on vital issues of personal, social, and political circumstance. McGann's essay, "Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism", formulates this precise problem in more general terms:

> To hold a literary analysis within a purely poetic space is to ensure the conclusion--rampant in such criticism--that the subject of literature--is literature.[29]

Reading and writing exist outside of an aesthetic space and free from the de Manian "prison-house of language" (BI, 18), as according to McGann, "poetry is itself one form of social activity" and so occupies "social

space". Once poetry is rendered a social act, taking account of the audience addressed, the circumstances surrounding its composition, and authorial decisions about where, if at all, it should be published, criticism is permitted to include extrinsic socio-historical material, as the poetic act is one "involved with extra-poetic operations" (BI, 21). McGann's identification of a poetic act as a social one permits the critic "to elucidate the...(presumed) network of social relations" within a poem (BI, 18), regardless of his own chastisement of critics concerned with "poetic space", who focus on literature as its own subject. In spite of the contradictory methodology, McGann does highlight the lack of critical attention given to the social and political aspects of the aesthetic in initial deconstructive approaches to Romantic literature.

The historical critic must unearth the public and private social and political situation surrounding a poem's point of origin and its circulation by excavating a text's bibliographical history to reveal the "first explicit appearance of the poem's meaning" (BI, 32). Such a process is vital, because when the poem is no longer under authorial influence, its "critical history"--consisting of responses by reviewers and critics--begins; and "all subsequent responses [will] derive in some way from [this] initial event" (BI, 51). Historical criticism is concerned with the recovery of the socio-historical origin of a text, mediated through its reception by future readers, who "remain part of the processive life of the poem" and bear witness to it as a "social event" (BI, 24-5). Unlike deconstructionist accounts of failed attempts to find a centre, this social origin is--if not entirely recoverable--semi-retrievable through a historical reading of the text:

> ...art works are forever placed in historicity, that is, in the vertical and horizontal circumstances which define human events. (BI, 64)

Poetical acts are perpetually implicated in the criss-crossing currents of past, present and future socio-political history which ensure a literary text cannot be isolated from its social and historical context. A poem's meaning is always partially recoverable rather than forever lost amongst the endless figures and tropes of deconstruction. Consequently, McGann is able to produce the aesthete Keats, as a poet all too well aware of the "'world-wind'" of a social unrest and political discontent exacerbated by poor harvests, the suspension of Habeas Corpus, and the Peterloo massacre (BI, 39; 58). These events inform McGann's account of "To Autumn"'s apparent transcendence of history, through its idealising portrayal of a perfect autumn, when Keats is acutely aware of that particular autumn's social and political imperfections. Keats calls upon the reader's suspension of disbelief precisely because he knows the autumn of the poem is far removed from the socio-political reality, and only resembles the autumns painted by Poussin and Claude (BI, 57-8; 55). "To Autumn"'s meaning rests with the extrinsic historical material deliberately excluded from its finished literary text. What, according to McGann, is created out of Keats's autumnal stay in Winchester is a "'world elsewhere'" (BI, 57):

> ...a charmed world far removed from the quotidian press of his money affairs and the dangerous political tensions of his society. (BI, 58)

Romantic attempts at escapism reveal the impossibility of escaping historical circumstances; acts of aesthetic transcendence are already social acts and will, inevitably, bear the marks of their socio-historical contexts. Conversely, McGann's Historical Method strips away the layers of Romantic fictions about the self (or mind), desire, and even the imagination to reveal how a text charts the social, political, and historical situations which determined its formation:

> Romantic poems repeatedly discover: that there is no place of refuge, not in desire, not in the mind, not in imagination. (RI, 145)

Unfortunately, the decision about what extrinsic material is considered relevant to a particular text must always remain arbitary; relying upon a subjective critical judgement to determine what social and political factors are salient to extract the "historical meaning" of a Romantic poem. If this is the case the "historical meaning" of a text, like the historical moment of its composition, must remain in a state of arbitration, persistently re-interpreted, re-invented, and reconstructed, by present and future audiences in light of their own socio-political circumstances. The historical origin and meaning of a text is no more certain than deconstructionist accounts of Romantic failure to recover a point of origin.

Despite McGann's anti-deconstructionist position, his New Historical reading of "To Autumn" is peculiarly deconstructive in practice; although the text's apparent meaning is not contested by its own inherent inconsistencies, the poem is set at odds with its contemporary political

and social reality. Critical attention focuses on "To Autumn"'s framing-out of poor harvests, social deprivation, and political dissatisfaction to deconstruct the poem's idealised picture of the season, revealing it as a self-conscious and persuasive lie, which is deliberately contrived to signpost the reality of its historical circumstance. New Historicism risks favouring textual meanings rooted in the ever-absent and arbitrary over those that the more immediate presence of the text might yield, a critical risk inherent in the practices of New Historicism and deconstruction. Both these critical approaches turn out to share a common source of influence from Nietzsche's philosophy although, according to their specific agendas, they constructed two distinct versions of his thought. In contrast to those deconstructionists, who drew upon Nietzsche's dismantling of metaphysics in "On Truth and Falsity in the Ultra-moral Sense", McGann constructs a New Historical approach based on Nietzsche's treatment of history in <u>On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life</u> (<u>BI</u>, 10-12). Central to Nietzsche's untimely meditation is the way in which a single moment is forgotten, or repressed, only to be unwillingly remembered at some future historical point. Such a desire to forget eventually produces a capacity to remember. This is enacted, for McGann, by Keats's "To Autumn" and expressed by Nietzsche as that moment when:

> A leaf flutters from the scroll of time, floats away--and suddenly floats back again and falls into the man's lap. Then the man says 'I remember' and envies the animal, who at once forgets and for whom every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished for ever. (<u>UM</u>, 61)

Uncertainty about the meaning of a "text" is directly at odds with McGann's original intention to "encounter the human experience of the poem as finished" not only in terms of its "specified history", but "in terms of all human history" (BI, 21). More importantly, McGann displaces the idea of Romantic poems as primarily concerned with aesthetic process into his account of the socio-political conception and reception of a literary work, so that "the finished past is constantly being reformulated into new forms of finishedness" (BI, 12). McGann's assertion is founded in identifying the "text" as the "linguistic state of the 'poem's' existence" and a "sign of the poem's completion", so that it is the embodiment of the poem, even if the poem is more than the sum of its "text" (BI, 22). If the poem is not equal to its text--or linguistic state-it is freed from the "prison-house of language", but only because it is reduced to an uncertain quantity, to be guessed at by the critic. A New Historical critic, McGann would claim, is best equipped to determine the poem's nature by revealing the nexus of social and political relations that surrounded its composition and reception.

Curiously, the "text" contains no mention of these socio-political factors and yet "To Autumn"'s undetermined nature directly signposts these exact circumstances. The poem will inevitably provide this historical evidence--a poetic act is after all a social one--as McGann's investigation is committed to describing Romantic poems in terms of their social and political contexts. Regrettably, such a critical decision reduces a "poem" to either a label for a specific period of social history, or a vague notion to which an inexhaustible amount of extrinsic material can be appended. Poetry is reduced to an unnecessary stepping stone to a political and social past.

Deconstruction and New Historicism are not so alien to one another as may first appear. Similarities between these two apparently opposed critical movements are demonstrated in Bennett's recent deconstructionist account of Keats's "To Autumn". Confronted with the perfection of the poem Bennett abandons the focus on narrative and audience, so that he can instead analyse--from within and without--the poetic fiction, how "[f]igures of reading become, literally, economic figures and the silencing of politics and history in 'To Autumn'...repeated in the silence of critical response to the implicit political 'subtext' of the poem" (KNA, 160). Echoing McGann, Bennett is intent on exploring the poem's "figures of reading" as indicators of the socio-political pressures of the wider historical context that surrounded its composition. What is constructed, with this context in mind, is a radically transgressive "To Autumn"; a revolutionary poem that rejects social, political, financial, and topographical boundaries--all of which are implicated for Bennett in the agricultural legal struggle over private land ownership and the authorial wrestle to possess a proper name (KNA, 164):

> The peculiar resistance to the political which has been read into 'To Autumn' can be disfigured by the transgressions which constitute the politics of intertextuality in the poem: in order to read the politics of 'To Autumn' we must transgress the boundaries of authorial property, we must refuse to be figured within, or by, the bounds of the text. (KNA, 171)

Intertextuality becomes the means through which a transgressive act of reading is possible. "To Autumn" is precisely not about what is contained

within the boundaries of its own text but, according to Bennett, derives its significance from a complex networking with a vast matrix of past literature, including the poem's own original draft. Consequently, "Ceres is the pervasive unstated presence in 'To Autumn'" (KNA, 164), Keats's personified Autumn alludes to Pope's Mammon in the Epistle to Bathurst (KNA, 165), and his exchange of "a gold cloud gilds" for "barred clouds bloom" (25) is a sign of the poem's repression of monetary issues (KNA, 167); a further reference to agricultural enclosures is implied by Keats's final choice of "barred", taken to allude to Clare's "Helpstone" (KNA, 168).

Bennett's reading is distinct from McGann's New Historical interpretation, involving a framing-in, rather than a framing-out, of the socio-political circumstances relevant to the poem. Bennett prefers--in spite of his rejection of boundaries--to gain access to the salient nexus of public and private socio-political circumstances through the literary allusions framed within the poem, and their intersections with a whole matrix of socially aware literature. By contrast, McGann circumvents the matrix of literary allusion and directly accesses the nexus of socio-political history surrounding the poem's composition, asserting its significance because of the "text"'s framing-out of these events. Both critics are determined to unearth what is repressed in "To Autumn" and point toward the poignant presence of an eternal absence in the poem. What remains for the New Historicist and deconstructionist is an arbitary critical decision about what extrinsic literary and historical material should be supplemented to a particular text.

Unfortunately, Bennett's intertextual reading of "To Autumn" highlights precisely this crucial critical question and difficulty. By justifying his

literary practice with appeals to Barthes, and less explicitly Derrida, Bennett is able to claim that "textuality is intertextuality" and so reduce Keats's specific poem of "To Autumn" to a text indistinguishable from any other; after all "the Keatsian text is, like all texts, a tissue of gleanings" (KNA, 170). This reduction of "To Autumn" enables Bennett to evoke an array of the poem's literary interconnections with past works and those contemporary with Keats's own times. Yet surely, if all texts are intertexts how can Bennett determine which texts are the intertexts pertinent to Keats's "To Autumn"? Bennett takes no account of the fact that individual readers will bring their own particular matrix of literature to the text of "To Autumn", which will not only differ from his own, but produce readings of Keats's poem that involve texts of a later period; if Pope's Epistle to Bathurst, Andrew Tooke's Pantheon and Clare's "Helpstone" are salient to an intertextual account of "To Autumn", then should Wallace Stevens's "Sunday Morning" be excluded from this critical discussion? Indeed, the only grounds for exclusion would be if a particular text was unknown to an individual reader and so did not form part of his or her own personal literary matrix of intertexts. Such a matrix of intertexts risks permitting a study of subsequent influences on a deceased author's works.

New Historical criticism has given rise to a more general theoretical historical discourse, which to some degree has disseminated into more recent deconstructionist representations of Romanticism[30]; reflected in the work of Andrew Bennett, Ronald Tetreault, and Marjorie Levinson. Tetreault's study of Shelley combines, more successfully than Bennett's work on Keats, deconstructive practices with a sensitivity to the poet's desire to acquire an audience:

Bound by tradition, authority, and convention, the poet strains at the limits of rhetoric to create a poetic discourse that reaches out to its audience but does not bind them in turn in the iron grip of manipulative machinery.[31]

Tetreault's account of Shelley's poetry does not adhere to a dogmatic form of deconstruction, but instead understands that "[t]he task of the poet is to create a text sufficiently open and uncertain to engage the reader in the play of interpretation, to invite the reader to participate in the endless pursuit of meaning" (PL, 16). Broadly speaking, Tetreault's approach is "deconstructionist", although he remains alert to social, political, psychological and historical pressures which exert themselves on a literary text. Tetreault understands his own criticism as one of many possible approaches and regards the task of literary criticism as being "like turning a diamond in the light, the aim always being to show the gem's beauties to the greatest advantage" (PL, 17).

With increased historical awareness, critics with theoretical agendas have made some progress in redressing the balance against the more traditional apolitical representations of Romanticism, produced by de Man's deconstructive approach and advocated by Rajan's earlier work, Dark Interpreter. This partial convergence of these once distinctive critical movements highlights important questions about the literary theory behind their critical practices, which insist on a return to the fundamental issue of what should be included in and excluded from a particular reading of a text. Appropriately, Romantic criticism is forced to engage with the difficulties of the ever-absent present, as similar problems were encountered by Romantic attempts to fashion a figural "I"; a process that

produced both a fictive disclosure about the self in the present and the loss--or absence--of a vital previous self-construction. Critics of Romanticism, as readers and writers, not only provide a commentary on the Romantic processes of aesthetic self-construction, but are radically implicated in the processes of shaping their own literary and fictional self-identities.

The poetical works of Keats and Shelley share this interest in forging new aesthetic and social identities against past historical and literary tradition. Romantic excavations into the process of self-construction were haunted by the spectral figure of a poet's literary forefather or their own death, producing a deferral of responsibility to a future reader. Bloom's literary criticism is sensitive to these anxieties and yet maintains that a meaning of a poem "is excessively impoverished by a Nietzsche-inspired deconstruction" (MM, 85). What motivates Bloom's claim is a belief that to adhere to Nietzschean philosophy would require "deconstructing the thinking subject itself" and evaluating consciousness as a mere "mask" (MM, 86). These views are attributed to Nietzsche's writings when, in fact, they are only one version of his philosophy, constructed by those critics who prized Nietzsche as a proto-deconstructionist. Bloom's distrust of Nietzschean concepts is not born of a direct reading of Nietzsche, but from an uncritical acceptance of de Man's version of Nietzsche. A Romantic crisis over self-identity often turns out to be mirrored in contemporary criticism's explorations of the Romantic legacy, which discover that their own literary practices are suffering from an anxiety of influence in the wake of Leavis, de Man, and Nietzsche.

Notes

[1] Paul de Man, "Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism," in Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism: the Gauss Seminar and Other Papers, ed. R.S. Burt et al (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 26.

[2] Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism. 2nd ser. vol 4. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 185.

[3] F.R. Leavis, Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry. 1936. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 231, hereafter referred to as RV.

[4] See Earl R. Wasserman, The Finer Tone: Keats's Major Poems. 1953. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1967) and see John Jones, John Keats's Dream of Truth (London: Chatto, 1969), hereafter referred to as KDT.

[5] Helen Vendler, The Odes of John Keats (Harvard: Belknap, 1983), 10, hereafter referred to as OJK.

[6] Morris Dickstein, Keats's Poetry: A Study in Development (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971), xiv, hereafter referred to as KSD.

[7] Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking. 1959. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1969), 1-10, hereafter referred to as SM.

[8] Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1964), hereafter referred to as AV.

[9] Jerrold E. Hogle, Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), hereafter referred to as SP.

[10] Peter Sacks, "Last Clouds: A Reading of Adonais," SiR 23 (1984): 379-400, hereafter referred to as LC.

[11] Thomas Weiskel, The Romantic Sublime: A Study in Psychological Transcendence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

[12] Michael O'Neill, A Review of Jerrold Hogle, Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works. The Wordsworth Circle: 4 (1990): 154-6.

[13] Paul de Man, The Rhetoric of Romanticism (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 123; 122, hereafter referred to as RR.

[14] Seán Burke, The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1992), 111-13, hereafter referred to as DRA.

[15] M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), 255, hereafter referred to as NS.

[16] Tilottama Rajan, Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1980), 136, hereafter referred to as DI.

[17] Marjorie Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style. 1988. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 16, hereafter referred to as KLA.

[18] Paul Michael Privateer also shares with Rajan "similar assumptions about how...Nietzsche challenge[s] idealistic theories of representation." See Privateer, Romantic Voices: Identity and Ideology in British Poetry, 1789-1850 (Athens, GA: Georgia UP, 1991), 67; 65.

[19] Andrew Bennett, Keats, Narrative and Audience. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 6. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 4, hereafter referred to as KNA.

[20] De Man had scrutinised Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy. Harold Bloom connects de Man's view of the reader with Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Mark Edmundson expresses similar reservations to Bloom about the reader's

relation to the author in de Man: "[F]or de Man, the author is someone who says more than she knows, and whose authority is...ursurped by the reader, who will become prey to a similar dynamic in turn". See de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 79-102, hereafter referred to as ALR. See Edmundson, Literature against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: A Defence of Poetry. 1995. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 43. In addition Bloom offers an informative account of the relationship between tropes and figures, suggesting that tropes resemble "those errors about life that Nietzsche says are necessary for life". See also Bloom, A Map of Misreading (London: Oxford UP, 1975), 5; 93-5, hereafter referred to as MM.

[21] Tilottama Rajan, The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), 2, hereafter referred to as SR.

[22] Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in Margins of Philosophy. 1982. Trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 315-16, hereafter referred to as MP.

[23] Kathleen M. Wheeler, Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 12; 13, hereafter referred to as RPD.

[24] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 145.

[25] Harvey Birenbaum, Between Blake and Nietzsche (Toronto: Associated UP, 1992), xv-xvi, hereafter referred to as BBN. Lorraine Clark offers an alternative view, maintaining that "Blake and Kierkegaard retain a certain moderation that critically distinguishes them from Nietzsche". See Clark, Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 9.

[26] Tilottama Rajan, ed and intro., "Nietzsche and Romanticism: A Forum," SiR 29 (1990), 3, hereafter referred to as NR.

[27] Tilottama Rajan, "Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies after Paul de Man," SiR 24 (1985), 467; 451-74, hereafter referred to as DPS.

[28] Jerome J. McGann, The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983), 29; 71, hereafter referred to as RI.

[29] Jerome J. McGann, The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory. 1985. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) 49; 17-65, hereafter referred to as BI. The discussion of Keats was first published as "Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism," MLN 94 (1979): 988-1032.

[30] Thomas MacFarland, William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 31.

[31] Ronald Tetreault, The Poetry of Life: Shelley and Literary Form (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1987), 15-16, hereafter referred to as PL.

Chapter 2

"Being within our Being": Aesthetics of Self-Revision in Shelley's **A Defence of Poetry** and Keats's **Letters**.

> Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.[1]
>
> (P.B. Shelley)

> ...[A] World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul...[2]
>
> (John Keats)

> ...[I]f there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god![3]
>
> (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Recent readings of A Defence of Poetry view Shelley's response to Thomas Love Peacock's The Four Ages of Poetry within a broader intellectual context, extending beyond Hobbes, Hume and Locke to the philosophical enquiry of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and even Adorno. Rajan and Wheeler, with varying degrees of caution, describe A Defence of Poetry as a possible "precursor of a Nietzschean and phenomenological deconstruction" (SR, 289) and a "thoroughgoing rejection of dualistic thinking" (RPD, 12-13). Shelley and Nietzsche share a Kantian conviction that the observing mind and the world which it observes are constituted from a series of fictions. Such a conviction directly opposes Enlightenment faith in fixed

metaphysical certainties and encourages critical thinking without seeking to erect any new system of absolute values. Kant's assertion of quantity, quality, reason and modality as a priori categories of the mind promoted the importance of an observer's mental self-reflexivity to experiencing the phenomenal world. According to Kant's mental schema, sense data is actively arranged by an observer's mind to create a concept or symbol that has no relation to the observed empirical object, but permits its universal communicability.[4] Kant's emphasis on how experiencing phenomena effects the observer's mental life is even more pronounced in his Critique of Judgement, which argues that an observer presupposes that what he or she experiences as beautiful will cause the same pleasure in another. For Kant, aesthetic judgements are disinterested and only communicable through a "subjective universality".[5] Kant's belief in a universal subjectivism influenced eighteenth-century thinking about the aesthetic as an independent category and contributed to Romantic interest in self-reflexive speculation.[6]

Although Keats and Shelley express a Kantian commitment to ending a division between the experienced world and the experiencing mind, they are more sceptical than Kant about transcendental reason and understand the aesthetic as a mode of knowledge. Shelley's Defence recognises how Kantian reason has prescribed a system of mental categories through which reality is perceived and is a reminder that, in Robert Kaufmann's view, "it is not so much the world that is being legislated, as it is the implements for understanding the world".[7] A Defence of Poetry points to "the limits of objective knowledge" and defends poetry as one of those "forms of knowledge that are neither true nor false but open".[8] Like Nietzsche, Shelley understands truth and untruth, object and subject, scientific and literary

knowledge, world and mind as fictional. These concerns also occupy central passages of Keats's correspondence, which distrust the Enlightenment's project of classifying all phenomena in a "dull catalogue of common things" (Lamia, 2, 233) and discover that "[w]hat shocks the virtuous philoso[p]her delights the camelion poet" (KL, 1, 387). For Keats, in common with Shelley and Nietzsche, metaphysics is only a fictional interpretation of reality that has come to prescribe the nature of self and world. Keats's own formulation of "Negative Capability" promotes the self as a sequence of invasive fictions without metaphysical grounding and pre-empts Nietzsche's assertion "[t]hat one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea what one is" (EH, 64). Keats's epistles offer more than a diagnosis of the self's precarious fictional existence with their self-conscious representations of a "complex and shifting character" in style and tone.[9] Anticipating Nietzsche, Shelley and Keats advocate an aesthetic without didacticism which encompasses rather than excludes different modes of knowing to liberate the self from metaphysical constraints.

In Shelley's Defence, self remains as vital and elusive as the footsteps on the sand, "which the coming calm erases and whose traces remain only" (SPP, 504).[10] The difficulties of satisfactorily defining what is meant by the self are exacerbated by the philosophical complexities involved in arriving at such a definition and Shelley's varying usage of the term throughout the Defence. In spite of Shelley's anti-rationalism, he appears to mix a Platonic understanding of an immutable self with, on occasions, a formulation closer to eighteenth-century empirical psychology and a more transcendental Kantian model. Whatever is understood by Shelley's use of self it is always linked in the Defence to the central

subject of poetry and so implicated in an intrinsic relationship with the fine arts, or more widely, the aesthetic. To establish the nature not only of the self and the aesthetic, but the relation between the two, is crucial for Shelley's claim that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (SPP, 508).

"[P]oetry is connate with the origin of man" (SPP, 480), one of Shelley's earliest claims in the Defence, is essential for illuminating the text's complex handling of the self. This assertion extends beyond an anthropocentric view of the universe, in which "men dance and sing and imitate natural objects" (SPP, 481), towards a more radical description of the Cartesian moment when consciousness becomes aware of itself''--and the possibility of the concept of "man" is born. After all, "language itself is poetry" (SPP, 481; 482) and, in the widest sense, acts as "the hieroglyphics of...[our]...thoughts" (SPP, 483) by providing the means by which self-reflexivity can be mediated. Integral to this formation of language, a communicative system of verbal and non-verbal signs in Shelley's analysis, is the development of self-identity through an increasing awareness of its difference from anything other:

> ...[L]anguage and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them. (SPP, 481)

Self and poetry are inextricably bound together by an organising--if not organic--"principle within the human being", which desires "not melody alone, but harmony" (SPP, 480) and gives rise to the creation of language. Simultaneously, language conveys delight in what is beautiful, good,

harmonious, and can express self-awareness. This capacity for self-reflection and ability to respond to the beautiful are necessitated through and by language--or poetry--which, in its broadest sense, is a system of meaningful signs. Pre-empting Nietzsche's Apollonian mode of "pleasurable illusions [Scheine]" (BT, 43), Shelley contends that the invention of language reveals a human impulse to reproduce the rhythmic and ordered, so that harmony and unity are delighted in wherever they are found and incorporated, instinctively, into creative activities:

> And, although all men observe a similar, they observe not the same order, in the motions of a dance, in the melody of a song, in the combinations of language, in the series of their imitations of natural objects...Every man in the infancy of art, observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which highest delight results... (SPP, 481)

This "faculty of approximation" enables the observer to experience the beautiful, by establishing a "relation between the highest pleasure and its cause" (SPP, 482). Those possessing this faculty "in excess are poets" and their task is to communicate the "pleasure" of their experiences to the community (SPP, 482). Shelley is not claiming language is poetry on the grounds that language is the medium of poetry; rather he recognises in the creation of language an adherence to the poetic precepts of order, harmony, unity, and a desire to express delight in the beautiful. Consequently poetry, in the Defence, is a term which encompasses all human creative and artistic efforts either to approximate the beautiful, or imitate its rhythmic order.

Almost from the outset of the Defence Shelley is eager to place his explorations of the origin of man and poetry in a social context, asserting a concept of human conduct governed by the "will of a social being" (SPP, 481) and focusing on the communal activities of dance, song, and communication. These aesthetic acts are all considered as poetry--a term synonymous with language--and as such invested with the task of communicating their experiences of the beautiful to engender "a sort of reduplication from that community" (SPP, 482). Aesthetic admiration of "the true and the beautiful" (SPP, 482) is provided with an important social aspect which extends beyond communication to initiating a process of self-awareness. This enables Shelley to assert later in his argument the utility of poetry in the face of Utilitarian philosophy. Poetry and the various modes of the aesthetic it incorporates are directly implicated in, rather than alienated from, the social dimension of life (a vital relationship to establish if poets are to be "unacknowledged legislators of the world").

Language and poetry, in Shelley's view, are enmeshed in all spheres of human activity. Firstly, on a fundamental level, through mediating a process of self-awareness, secondly, by revealing the true and the beautiful, through the relation between the cognitive faculty of perception and what is perceived, and lastly, through its instinctive adherence to the principle of order--the establishment of governing institutions in civilised society:

> ...[T]o be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception,and secondly between perception and expression...

> But poets...are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society... (SPP, 482)

Aesthetic, social, and linguistic order are not the sole products of the rational faculty, which recognises only "differences" and consists of the "the enumeration of quantities already known" (SPP, 480). In this respect reason is subordinate to the imaginative faculty that promotes unity and is capable only of respecting "the similitudes of things" (SPP, 480). Language is "arbitrarily produced by the imagination" (SPP, 483) and reveals "the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension" (DP, 482), which pertain to a higher beauty and truth. Unsurprisingly, Shelley does not subscribe to a fixed logocentric system of language, as he warns against words becoming fixed "signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts" and maintains, as does Nietzsche, that "language is vitally metaphorical" (SPP, 482).

Keats, in a letter of November 1817, invests imagination's ingenuity with a similar capacity to discover its own created truths, so that "[w]hat the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth" is in opposition to "consequitive reasoning" (KL, 1, 184; 185), which seeks to define, label and catalogue human existence.[12] Keats's "Speculation" about the conflict between sensation and thought, poet and philosopher, leads to an assertion that imagination's "own silent [w]orking" can create and re-create existence in a "finer tone" through "its empyreal reflection [which] is the same as human life and its spiritual repetition" (KL, 1, 185). This "finer

tone" is only possible when imagination coalesces self and world, subject and object, to create a "Shadow of reality to come" (KL, 1, 185). Preferring "a Life of Sensations rather than Thoughts" (KL, 1, 185), Keats advocates dissolving his identity in the moment of a "setting sun" or taking part in a sparrow's "existfe]nce and pick about the Gravel" (KL, 1, 186). Fully aware that not "even the greatest Philosopher ever...arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections" (KL, 1, 185) and that philosophy's dictums are only another kind of fiction, Keats favours imagination and sensation over intellect and reason. Imagination can invent and re-invent the self and world in an endless series of fictions free from the dogma of reason.

If poets do not continually act, according to Shelley, as the "authors of language" and "create afresh the associations" of words, which risk becoming fixed signs, then "language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse" (SPP, 482). What is anticipated, and feared, in Shelley's early analysis of language in the Defence, is a linguistic system dominated by reason, which denies its own fictionality and asserts its authority over the productions of the imaginative faculty. A continued investment in transcendental reason led Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment philosophy to decline into a rational and, as Nietzsche diagnosed, metaphysical language system rooted in the fixity of signs, established through habit and custom. This failure of metaphysics to acknowledge its poetic and imaginative origins produces an active suppression of poetry:

> ...[W]e have more scientific and [...]economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which

it multiplies. The poetry in these systems of thought is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes. (SPP, 502)

If "language is vitally metaphorical", then the fixed signs of rational and metaphysical systems are only metaphors for the experiential world--regardless of how well established they seem--as any given sign is only a representation of a thing and never a thing in itself. In spite of its appeals to the actual facts of experience, metaphysics is only another fiction in contest with many other possible interpretations of the universe. Unavoidably these attempts to interpret the experiential world involve an explication of how through the medium of language, the self constructs its own self-perception and determines the nature of its relationship with the universe. Self cannot only invent and re-invent the universe. Owing to language's ability to produce a "before unapprehended relations of things", it can equally invent and re-invent its own self-perception and identity.

This continual process of self-discovery and self-revision is central to Keats's formulation of "Negative Capability", which emphasises how important undergoing a loss of a former sense of self is to re-inventing or rediscovering a new one:

> [T]he poetical Character...has no self--it is everything and nothing--it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low...It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. (KL, 1, 386-7)

Keats's concept of poetic identity pre-empts Nietzsche's claim that "one does not have the remotest idea what one is" (EH, 64) and frees the self to occupy the extremities of "everything and nothing", "light and shade", "foul or fair". Like Nietzsche's critique of Enlightenment's notion of the subject's unity, Keats perceives a direct connection between the creative processes of writing and the creation of a self unable to assert itself as a metaphysical category because of its awareness of its fictional status:

> If then he [the poet] has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would...write no more...It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature--how can it, when I have no nature? (KL, 1, 387)

Written in October 1818 to Richard Woodhouse, Keats's letter is pervaded by uncertainty about the validity of personal opinions. The Keatsian self is forever in potentia, wavering between "everything and nothing", verging on self-discovery and self-invention through writing its own irretrievable loss. According to Keats and Nietzsche, it is exactly this loss of identity which liberates the self from a fixed metaphysical system, leading to a recognition of the self's awareness of its own myriad natures. Both Keats and Nietzsche favour a multiple and flexible self conceived as an endlessly revisable script.

Shelley's insistence that language is "vitally metaphorical" also discloses an extreme fictionality of the self and its interpretations of the universe. Paradoxically, A Defence of Poetry frames its own claims for

fictionality and self-revision in metaphysical formulations. An individual's impulse for harmony is revealed by a Platonic desire for the "good", the "beautiful", and the "truth", and the poet's activity is underpinned by a participation in the "one" (SPP, 482; 483). Equally, Shelley's analysis of language appears coloured with a Kantian belief in the universal communicability of knowledge. All of these formulations, seemingly at odds with Shelley's critique of reason, might indicate some kind of metaphysical cornerstone upon which he wished to build his ontological account.

In spite of a recurrence of these quasi-metaphysical claims in the Defence, Shelley's appeal to what is transcendentally true and "beautiful" appears, on closer examination, not an attempt to establish a secure philosophic anchor-point for the self and language, but an indicator of the shifting intellectual sands underlying his own ideas. The true and "beautiful" are not attributed an unassailable absolutism ascribed to them by Plato and Kant. Shelley's handling of these terms is more sceptical about the ideal status they are attributed in the Platonic and Kantian systems:

> Poetry ever communicates all the pleasure which men are capable of receiving: it is ever still the light of life; the source of whatever of beautiful or generous or true can have place in an evil time. (SPP, 493)

Truth and beauty are subordinate to the illuminating source of poetry which, simultaneously, identifies the harmonious in phenomena and expresses the "pleasure" this recognition can cause. Whatever can be regarded as true

or "beautiful" is relative to its particular historical context--a claim which risks reducing the truth and beauty of a thing to either being the best product of "an evil time" or the worst of a happier one. A subjectivism is implicated in the Defence, for all its Platonic and Kantian transcendental apparel, which defers the status of the true and the "beautiful" to a historical, as well as an individual, process of perception and response. In Shelley's sceptical view, "beauty" and truth are inextricably bound up with this process, rather than unequivocally postulated as transcendent and objective Ideal Forms. Instead, determined by historical, cultural, and social circumstance, the true and the "beautiful" are only interpretations of what Shelley refers to as the "one".[13]

The relative concepts of the "true", the "beautiful", and the "good" are securely tethered to the "one", which is both "eternal" and "infinite" and transcends "time and place and number" (SPP, 483). The aesthetic, in the Defence, is at once a product of a particular historical and cultural milieu and a part of the transcendent "one" beyond the circumstantial and temporal. Poets are central to this formulation of the aesthetic, as although they live in a mutable and experiential world they have the capacity to "imagine and express...[an]...indestructible order" (SPP, 482) that lies beyond interpretations of the "beautiful" and metaphysical systems of reason:

> For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of

latest time. (SPP, 482-3)

Crucially, the poet is the sole creator and origin of this "indestructible order", instead of these inventions having a source in a metaphysical divine being or Ideal Form. Effectively, a poetic creation is self-validating and self-sustaining, adhering only to the fundamental precepts of unity and the disclosure of "before unapprehended relations". Self-validating poetic fictions must be constantly invented, re-invented, and revised. Consequently, a perception of self and universe are persistently undergoing a revelation about the, otherwise, "dull vapours of the little world of the self" (SPP, 497). The "one" is not established as an underlying metaphysical cornerstone from which all poetry is constructed; it is, rather, a necessary and revealing fiction woven into Shelley's own poetics.

These fictions, although self-validating, are not totalising explanations of the universe, because Shelley's theorising about language does not assert that it is all-inclusive of the experiential world. The limits of language, as in Wittgenstein, are the limits of an individual's world, but this is not to deny that there are elements of a particular individual's world which exist outside and beyond their linguistic interpretations of the experiential.'[4] In aesthetic terms a human impulse for harmony and beauty, or the "spirit of events" behind the creativity of the poet-prophet (SPP, 483), are the primordial and pre-linguistic Dionysian origins of poetry. Counterbalancing the Defence's tendencies towards a subjective perspectivism is a desire to discover, either within or without, a sublime whole. Such idealism co-exists with Shelley's scepticism, manifesting itself in Milton's conception of Paradise Lost as a

"whole before he executed it in portions" (SPP, 483) and the poet's participation in the "infinite and the one".

Present in this understanding of a particular literary work as a part of a preconceived whole, the contribution of an intellectual epoch to a universal poetic scheme, and the rewriting (or linguistic reinvention) of established traditions, are the aesthetic dynamics of Shelleyan self-construction. The co-existence of scepticism and idealism, part and whole, subjective and objective, within the Defence's poetic fabric, forces the possibility of uniting these oppositions and opens up an enormous potentiality for the self. Uncovering and inventing the true nature of self and its identity now rests with the interior as much as the exterior; or the subjective "centre" (SPP, 503) of a self is no less valid than attempts to locate a true self in its objective transcendental "circumference" (SPP, 508).

What emerges is the presence of too many uncertainties in the Defence to construct a comprehensive explanation of its argument. Such a reading would assume the text had been written as a water-tight philosophical treatise, instead of as a complex composition, struggling to weave a poetical prose from artistic and philosophic fictions of the past and present to highlight contemporary theoretical difficulties. Loyal to the nature of poetry it seeks to defend, the Defence avoids subscribing to a particular system of metaphysics, or asserting itself as the only valid interpretation of self, language, and the universe. It asserts equally the origin of poetry as exterior and interior to the self; implying that self-identity rests both with a participation in the transcendent external "one" and an unearthing of the internal "being within our being" (SPP, 505); and analysing language as a means of critiquing reason, whilst upholding the

Enlightenment notion of its "relation to thoughts alone" (SPP, 483).[15] Self-validating poetic fictions do not resolve conflicts between these opposed factions, permitting instead their multiple co-existences, so that poetry "is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge" (DP, 503).

The poetic spirit not only allows a self to participate in the "eternal" and the "one", but "redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man" (SPP, 505). Self is both in and of the universe, existing as "an atom" (SPP, 505), which is peculiarly particular and finite, and yet inextricable from the infinite whole of cosmic processes. Like poetry, the self is a product of historical and cultural circumstance: simultaneously, its vital essence is a-historical and a-temporal. Poetry has the capacity to unmask--a process involving creation and invention--the self's real nature by stripping the metaphysical "veil of familiarity from the world" (SPP, 505). Detached from the foundation of a metaphysical cornerstone, the self is capable, through metaphorical language, of re-inventing its own perception of the universe and itself. Keats's own account of "spirit creation" blends a metaphysical vocabulary of "Intelligence", "Mind" and "World" with a constant flux of "provings and alterations and perfectionings" to an "identity" (KL, 2, 103). Unlike the Defence, Keats's description of self-creation foregrounds the importance of suffering "in a world of Circumstances" where a "heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways" (KL, 2, 102). Similar to Shelley's Defence, Keats's notion of "spirit creation" unites the temporal and finite with the eternal and infinite, but does so by specifically addressing the necessity of experiencing a "World of Pains" to create an identity, or soul:

> [I]ntelligences are atoms of perception--they know and they see

> and they are pure, in short they are God--how then are souls to be made?...How, but by a medium of a world like this? (KL, 2, 102)

Keats's "Vale of Soul-making" recognised the "highest terms for man" (KL, 2, 102), investing individuals with the immortal potentiality to attain their true identity, prefiguring Nietzsche's advocacy of a return to bodily sensations and his belief that "[y]ou should follow your senses to the end" (Z, 110) in order that humanity overcome itself through an act of self-creation so as to transform "everything...into the humanly-conceivable, the humanly-evident, the humanly-palpable" (Z, 110). Like Nietzsche's union of intellect and desire in the "Will", Keats maintained the inextricable nature of thought and sensation, asserting "[n]othing ever becomes real till it is experienced" (KL, 2, 81):

> ...[F]or axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine--things until...we have gone the same steps as the Author. (KL, 2, 279)

For Keats and Shelley, self and world are infinitely revisable once the potential for collapsing a transcendent objective into the subjective and perspective is realised. Self ceases to be just a participant in the abstract: to borrow from Coleridge, the "I AM" actively exercises its own god-like powers of creation and invention to disclose its own divinity:[16]

> [Poetry]...whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a

world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel what we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. (SPP, 505)

Discovering, inventing and revising the "being within our being" is about a continual process of aesthetic self-construction--the revelation and invention of an "eternal truth" about the self and its relation to the universe--premissed upon the essential understanding that "to imagine that which we know" is to actually have grasped an insight. Keats's belief in the validity of imagination's creations is perfectly expressed when he writes that "[t]he imagination may be compared with Adam's dream--he awoke and found it truth" (KL, 1, 185). Poetic fictions must be constantly re-invented, persistently worked up into complex poetical fabrics that are a part of the revealing and concealing "figured curtain". The poetic fabric of this "figured curtain" must always be evolving, or else it risks itself becoming an obscuring "veil of familiarity"--poetic fictions can mask the "eternal truth" as easily as they disclose it. Such difficulties are inherent in language as the medium of poetry, because language excludes and contains to be meaningful, like the "cloud which enfeebles" (SPP, 485), because signs are forever at odds with the poetic spirit which like "a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed... consumes, the scabbard that would contain it" (SPP, 491).

Poetry is at once concealing and revealing, altering the perception of "our inward sight" by peeling back "life's dark veil"--synonymous with the "film of familiarity" which conceals the "wonder of our being"--by,

paradoxically, casting its own fictive "figured curtain" of metaphorical and hieroglyphic patterns over the cosmos. Shelley's "dark veil" foreshadows Nietzsche's description of the veil of maya, which summons "us to tear the veil and to uncover the mysterious background" and is as likely "to reveal something as to conceal something" (BT, 139-40). The metaphorical language of poetry permits the birth of previously unrecognised relations of meaning and perception. A creative chaos displaces the notion of divine logos and the "common universe" of rationality can be re-discovered and re-invented in hand with the "being within our being". Shelley's ontological account of the self exacerbates a collapse of the subject and object into one another by closing the distinction between sensation and perception, and allowing the mental faculties to imagine--or invent--knowledge as opposed to simply amassing it from sense data. In this respect Shelley's account resembles a Heideggerian formulation of being as presence[17], in which being in and knowing of the world are one and the same. Self, on one hand, is finite and inextricable from "a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur", and, on the other, is infinite and a-temporal as it contains all "possible varieties of human nature" and "is itself the image of all other minds" (SPP, 485).

Philosophers and poets are curiously yoked together in the Defence's poetical prose, their uneasy alliance dependent upon Shelley's invocation of them for literary and philosophic authority, so that these separate traditions can be deliberately misread. Plato's task is interpreted by Shelley as an essentially poetical one, owing to his comprehension of "the past, present, and the future condition of man" (SPP, 496). Nor is Plato alone in being counted as one of the "poetical philosophers", as he finds

himself amongst the philosophic "exertions of Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire...[and]...Rousseau" (SPP, 502). Conversely, a poetical undertaking of Paradise Lost is viewed as a "philosophical refutation" and deconstruction of its own theological system; or the poetic delvings of Shakespeare, Spenser, or Petrarch into the Platonic subject of love affirm Plato as a "worthy poet" and these poets as an earnest part of philosophical enquiry (SPP, 497).

Shelley's representation of philosophic and literary tradition is vital to his archaeological--and retrospective--account of the development of literature, ideas and the self, which is able to identify the significant "epochs of the world" (SPP, 482), and their specific contributions to the great "cyclic poem" (SPP, 482). Consequently, the Defence claims membership of, and authority from, these co-existing traditions whilst subverting them for its own ends. Ultimately, in the Defence, it is philosophy which is subsumed into poetry and not poetry into philosophy; as its metaphysical systems are rendered fictions of a larger poetic fiction since poetry "is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred" (SPP, 503). The world's legislators are to be poets (no longer a task to be shared with philosophers, as Shelley excluded them from the Defence's text, in contrast to their earlier inclusion in A Philosophical View of Reform).

Shelley's Defence urges a new understanding of the self and the aesthetic not by resolving the conflict between subject and object, but by mediating a co-existence between them which defers ultimate reconciliation to a future reader who must, in Keats's words, take "the same steps as the Author" (KL, 279). This future mediation is ensured by the Janus-faced nature of the self and poetry in Shelley's Defence; poetry and self are

capable of liberating individuals from social conventions, established institutions, and financial interests of Enlightenment thought: they are able to enforce social and intellectual conventions; they can also imprison an individual in a self-interested metaphysical prison-house of language (the fixed and definite state of the "Self" implied by Shelley's use of the capital). For Shelley, this metaphysical mode of "Self" is directly at odds with the metaphorical mode of poetry:

> Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world. (SPP, 503)

Ultimately, Shelley places his trust in an on-going self-affirming and self-validating process through a perpetual invention of poetic fictions:

> Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. (SPP, 488)

An individual self is similar to a manuscript of a poem, as it must be written, revised, and re-written, through a weaving of a self-sustaining fiction--represented by the "figured curtain"--which no sooner sheds light upon the nature of the self than it is engulfed by darkness:

> ...[F]or the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to tran-

> sitory brightness, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed... (SPP, 503-4)

Process is vital to the Defence's treatment of the self and the aesthetic; the work is concerned with the writing process and with processes of perception and expression. Indeed, it is within these creative processes that true self-identity is to be located, not as a final, realisable, state, but as an on-going aesthetic construction. Shelley's Defence, by freeing the self from a metaphysical system, opens up the possibility of uniting subject with object; effectively, it is the genesis of an ontological account of the self's relation to the universe over an epistemological one. In this respect the Defence permits an intellectual confluence by revising previous literary and philosophic traditions, claiming the advantages of hindsight for its archaelogical explorations, but deferring a resolution of the difficulties encountered to a future reader.

From our own vantage point in intellectual history, Shelleyan and Keatsian formulations of the self as a perpetual process of revision can be identified with the Nietzschean concept of self as a "going-between" (Z, 43). To draw these parallels does not signify an end to the processes initiated in Shelley's A Defence of Poetry and Keats's letters, but instead re-asserts these issues of self and aesthetic as a continuing intellectual project.

Notes

[1] SPP, 505.

[2] KL, 2, 102.

[3] Z, 110.

[4] James Engell, The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981), 131-2.

[5] Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgement, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), 50-1. For an outline of Kant's position see Sean Burke, ed. Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995), xxii-xxii.

[6] Christopher Norris, Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory. 1988. (Leicester: Leicester UP), 1992, 191-3, hereafter referred to as DIT. See Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 373.

[7] Robert Kaufmann, "Legislators of the Post-Everything World: Shelley's Defence of Adorno," ELH 63 (1996), 726; 707-33.

[8] Paul H. Fry, The Reach of Criticism: Method and Perception in Literary Theory (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 167.

[9] Timothy Webb, "'Cutting Figures': Rhetorical Strategies in Keats's Letters," Keats: Bicentenary Readings ed. Michael O'Neill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997), 147.

[10] I follow Stanley Corngold's distinction between subject and the self. The subject equates an ego, constituting the psychological site of self-reflexivity. By contrast, the "authentic 'Self'" formulates experiences of the world as self-knowledge. It is this metaphysical concept of an "authentic 'Self'" that Nietzsche wants to dismantle so that a truly

creative self can be liberated. See Corngold, The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 4; 96-128.

[11] René Descartes, "Second Meditation," in Discourse on Method and the Meditations. 1968. Trans and intro F.E. Sutcliffe. (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1977), 105.

[12] Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats. 1963. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1972), 239.

[13] Earl R. Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading. 1971. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977), 211.

[14] SR, 279.

[15] SR, 283.

[16] Patricia Waugh, Practising Postmodernism / Reading Modernism. 1992. Interrogating Texts. (London: Arnold, 1993), 21, hereafter referred to as PPRM. See also Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria: Or Biographical Sketches of My Life and Work. 2 parts, vol 7. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (London: Routledge, 1983), 304, hereafter referred to as BL.

[17] DRA, 117-8.

Chapter 3

"Faery Lands Forlorn": Tragic Romance in **Endymion** and **Alastor**.

"The journey homeward to habitual self..."[1]

(John Keats)

"And what am I that I should linger here..."[2]

(P.B. Shelley)

"It is returning, at last it is coming home to me--my own Self and those parts of it that have long been abroad [in der Fremde] and scattered among all things..."[3]

(Friedrich Nietzsche)

Romantic revisionist practices bore testimony to the movement's revival of the romance world, populated with brave chivalric heroes, youthful paramours, cruel tyrants, wizards and fairies, living out their existences amongst the leafy vales of Arcady, elfin grottoes, and Spenserian "bowers of bliss". Romanticism's return to the romance genre recognised it as a literary mode already accustomed to political, social and aesthetic controversy since its adoption by Bunyan, Milton and Spenser. Although the Romantic movement reworked the aesthetic, social, and political allegories of romance, in response to both the outcome of the French Revolution and domestic political affairs, the essential quest motif and the dual

conception of reality were retained by Romanticism. Romantic poets unearthed in, and affirmed through the romance mode, their own belief in the pivotal dualities of innocence and experience, life and death, surface and depth, and the ideal and the real.

Both Keats and Shelley were drawn towards romance as a benevolent arena which would allow them to produce their first polished poetical works. Both poets had previously experimented with the conventions and concerns of Romance; Shelley's lengthy visionary poem Queen Mab anticipated the writing of Alastor and Keats produced his "Calidore" fragment prior to the composition of Endymion. The choice of the romance genre for their major poetical débuts reflected anxieties over their literary aspirations to attain the lofty poetic heights of the daunting Milton, or those of the more accessible, but equally respected, Spenser.[4] Keats's and Shelley's preference for Romance also underlines their concern to ensure that their newly emerging poetical characters were aligned with a truly English lineage of literary ancestors. These revisionist patterns are more complex than may first appear: Shelley's Alastor corrects Wordsworth's The Excursion, while Keats's Endymion was composed as a redress to, and revision of, the underlying message of Alastor.[5] At the same time Romantic revisionism involved inter-textual dialogues with past literary ancestors (Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, for instance).

Both Endymion and Alastor depict a quest for an alluring absent lady, often characterised as an auto-erotic journey that points towards the inherent dangers of confusing fiction and fact, although in many other respects these two poems appear at odds with one another.[6] This oppositional stance between the two romances is to some degree unsurprising, given Keats's sad reflection on Endymion that "this youngster

should die away" (Preface, 102) and his later advice to Shelley to "curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and 'load every rift' of your subject with ore" (KL 2, 323). Shelley fiercely defended an opposite view of Alastor's poet-figure whose "self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin" (Preface, 15). Nonetheless, Keats recognised that his more mature and assured self-concentrated poetical character--which he wished to impress on Shelley--had not prevailed during the composition of Endymion:

> And is this not extraordina[r]y talk for the writer of Endymion? whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards--I am picked up and sorted to a pip. (KL, 2, 323)

This is not to suggest that at some early stage the poetical characters of Keats and Shelley were ever identical, but to emphasise the formative and experimental stage the writing of Alastor and Endymion represented in Shelley's and Keats's poetic careers. Neither poet had yet developed a hard-and-fast aesthetic theory and consequently, in spite of the apparent antagonism between the two romances, both poems are shot through with shared ambiguities and anxieties. Unfortunately, recognition of these shared affinities has been coloured by critical determination, after Leavis, to render Shelley as the airy, abstract metaphysician, opposed to Keats the sensuous, earthy, aesthete.

Endymion has, consequently, been characterised as a meandering maze of disconnected potential narratives and poetic pictures, through which Keats struggles to find the right narrative path and perfect his own distinctive poetic language of "Snailhorn perception". Stuart M. Sperry, John Jones and

Morris Dickstein--interested in Keats's poetic development--concentrate on Endymion as a transitional poem, marking Keats's departure from the idyllic realms of his early 1817 verse to the more weighty and tragic concerns of the mature "Hyperion" fragments and odes (KDT, 84-9; KSD, 129). In general Sperry, Jones and Dickstein believe Keats's romance to be his first significant attempt, no matter how flawed, to work out the place of suffering in the poet's emerging aesthetics of beauty and truth. Such aesthetical readings have always been reluctant to pin down Endymion's allegory. Not only are they aware, as Keats was, that the poem's "foundations are too sandy" (Preface, 102), but they also take note of Sperry's own description of the poem as "a little wilderness amid whose tangle one can wander happily but at the risk of becoming lost".[7]

These accounts of Endymion, as a poem concerned with its own origins, through the processes of literary "invention" and storytelling, are riddled with anxiety about the choice of subject, style and form. Such readings have come to fruition in the theoretical work of Marjorie Levinson, who argues that "most of the 1817 poems are 'about' their own coming into being" (KLA, 243). Although Levinson's study maintains a critical silence about Endymion her formulation of the 1817 poems' preoccupation with their own creative processes and origins chimes with the handful of other theoretical readings of the poem. Martin Aske's account of Endymion, in his study of Keats's fascination with Greek antiquity, argues that Endymion resists being constructed, either by the poet or reader, as a unified literary work. The tendency of the "text" to "erase that which it had desired to represent" is viewed as an impulse towards fragmentation in reaction against a totalising whole.[8] This instability of Endymion's narrative framework has been noted most recently by Andrew Bennett, who

perceives the poem as a series of narrative impulses and digressions, littered with numerous false starts of "surrogate tales" (KNA, 81; 76), which ultimately reveal their own inventive origins, as Keats's effort to "make 4,000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with poetry" (KL, 1, 170). Alternatively, Daniel P. Watkins has offered a materialist historical account of Endymion, which situates the poem in the socio-political context of post-Waterloo Britain, reading Keats's narrative, in spite of its lack of clarity, as rooted in the "fear of the world coming apart at the seams, and an attempt to prevent this by projecting a world subject to the control of individual desire".[9]

Theoretical critical accounts of Keats's Endymion focus on the poem's awareness of its own fictionality: evident in the narrative's disclosures about the poem's origins of "invention", the arbitary nature of its own particular poetic language, and the inability of poetic vision to console. The consensus of these critics is that Endymion is a poem about itself; concerned with, and revealing of, the very imaginative and poetic processes which permits the existence of its own fantastic romance. Endymion's revelations about its own precarious fictional status are often, mistakenly, asserted by this kind of criticism as ends in themselves without any further critical explanation. The poem's awareness of itself as a poem might be further illuminated, if it were considered in relation to Keats's preoccupation with self-construction and self-consciousness. In this respect commentators on Endymion might usefully borrow a leaf from recent critical readings of Alastor, which focus on Shelley's poem as an "introspective crisis...of self-knowledge and self-consciousness".[10]

The Romantic quest for an insight into a sublime truth or meaning, the task undertaken by Endymion and Shelley's poet-figure, inevitably involves

the process of constructing a self and its relation to the universe. Romantic re-workings of the Kantian understanding of the sublime experience initiated a shift away from an exclusive concern with the "subject" to the broader consideration of a self's relation to mundane and sublime experience. Consequently, Romantic explorations of the sublime persistently require aesthetic understandings of the self, whether in the form of Wordsworth's theory of the egotistical sublime, Keats's self-concentration through Negative Capability, or Shelley's complex and elusive understanding of a connection between "Poetry and the principle of Self" (SPP, 503).

Keats and Shelley revise Romance, omitting the moral certainties present in Spenser, choosing to concentrate on the spiritual or psychological dimensions of the genre. What emerged in the form of Endymion and Alastor were "psychodramas"[11] which portrayed the turbulent struggle of the self to re-orientate its relations with the world, once moral certainty was no longer an absolute and a Wordsworthian idealising of nature became inadequate to its desires. Keats and Shelley deliberately adopted an antagonistic stance to the Wordsworthian notion of communion with nature, troubled that such a scheme invested too greatly in solitary contemplation of, rather than in an ability to establish relations with other individuals. For Wordsworth, at least, the solitary contemplation of nature was the means to connect with the universal "life of things"[12] and to be aware of the "sad music of humanity" ("Tintern Abbey", 91). Neither Keats nor Shelley shared Wordsworth's "cheerful faith" in nature ("Tintern Abbey", 134), as they were increasingly aware of the potential self-deception involved in Wordsworth's retrospective myth-making, because of their own alertness to how the human mind fashions symbols--to depict its its own moods and desires--out of the perceived natural world. The problem

of self-deception, which was latent in Wordsworth, became one of greater concern to Keats and Shelley who were more sceptical about the moral and metaphysical certainties that seemed to secure Wordsworth's fiction:

> ...[O]f all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear,--both what they half create,
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being. ("Tintern Abbey", 105-11)

At first glance Keats's opening to Endymion might seem to endorse Wordsworth's understanding of nature. Keats's emphasis may rest directly with "beauty" (1, 1) rather than nature, but indirectly it is connected with the natural world of the "sun, the moon, Trees old" (1, 13-14), "daffodils" (1, 14), "clear rills" (1, 16) and "musk-rose blooms" (1, 19). Apparently, beauty rather like Wordsworth's nature will ensure a natural haven--the "bower quiet for us" (1, 4)--into which retreat is possible from "all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways / Made for our searching" (1. 10-11); in precisely the same way as the "simple sheep" shelter under the "shady boon" of a young tree (1, 14-15). Keats's "bower" of beauty does not fit so neatly into the Wordsworthian pattern as, simultaneously, it offers a balm to the dark turbulence of the world and transfigures humanity by moving "away the pall / From our dark spirits" (1, 12-13). Keats's "beauty" leads to a process of retreat and disclosure, not to a solitary Wordsworthian communion with humanity mediated by nature.

From the outset of Endymion Keats establishes an ambivalent attitude towards Wordsworth's fiction of nature, troubled both by the necessity of inventing these kinds of fictions (as a poet) and his awareness of their limitations.[13] Keats, even at this early poetical stage, is sensitive to the double-edged sword which imaginative fictions can be. He is haunted by the idea that a fiction has the potential to reveal as much as it deceives:

> ...[E]ven as the trees
> That whisper round a temple become soon
> Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
> The passion poesy, glories infinite,
> Haunt us till they become a cheering light
> Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
> That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast.
> They alway must be with us, or we die. (1, 26-33)

Natural beauty--whether in the form of the whispering "trees" or the glowing moon--attracts the attention of those who possess the "passion poesy", ensuring that nature's "glories infinite" become as important a focus for divine worship as the "temple"; the leafy location of the temple, consequently, becomes "dear as the temple's self". Implicitly, Keats turns the reader to the subject matter of his romance through a suggestion of a "temple" (perhaps Grecian in style?) and a foregrounding of the human propensity to invent mythical fictions about the natural world. The natural beauty of the trees suggests the origins of mythical tales of satyrs and sileni and the alluring shine of the moon a story of a mortal youth's love

for the goddess, Cynthia--the "one bare circumstance" that inspired Keats's poetic exploration of the tale of Endymion.

This kind of myth-making is vital to the human condition, because these fictions "must be with us, or we die", and yet at the same time they do not guarantee to improve anyone's particular lot, offering only a momentary respite from the "shine, or gloom o'ercast". The fictive "bower quiet for us" can only promise a return to the world of reality, which by contrast with the realm of "sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing" (1, 5), may seem more bleak and troubled than ever before. Such fictions, in Keats's view, are a blessing and a burden, as they "haunt us" with their potential to "become a cheering light" amongst the "gloom o'ercast". Like Wordsworth, Keats is drawn to the world of nature for a source of poetic inspiration--at some primitive stage, observations of the natural world gave rise to the creative act of myth-making[14]--and yet his early and acute awareness of the ambivalent nature of the fictive "bower" presses Keats to attempt to surpass his literary ancestor. Less than a month after writing the Preface to Endymion Keats, in a letter to John Reynolds, re-formulates his poetic relation to Wordsworth and the ambivalence of the idyllic "quiet breathing" bowers of Endymion--or what he now terms the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought"--in which:

> ...[W]e become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father ...[o]f convincing one['s] nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression--whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on

all sides of it many doors are set open--but all dark--all leading to dark passages...[T]o this point was Wordsworth come as far as I can conceive when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey' and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark [p]assages. (KL, 1, 281)

There is little doubt about the young poet's admiration for Wordsworth and the formative influence Wordsworth's poetry had on his choice of poetic subject--particularly Keats's recurring interest in mythology--and philosophical reflections on the "heart and nature of Man" (KL, 1, 281). Wordsworth ushers Keats into "dark passages"[15] when his poetic explorations "into the life of things" ("Tintern Abbey", 49) trigger a return to an awareness of the "still, sad music of humanity" ("Tintern Abbey", 91). Ironically, it is precisely Keats's desire to explore the "dark passages" of human existence and nature which force him, in spite of his admiration, to gradually distance himself from Wordsworthian influence. Even before the Chamber of Maiden Thought letter Keats was sure "that we ought to read our Contemporaries...that Wordsworth &c should have their dues from us" but still troubled about readers being "bullied into a certain kind of philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist" (KL, 1, 223). Ultimately, it was differences over the kind of poetic process necessary to an investigation of the "heart and nature of Man" that set Keats and Wordsworth apart from one another, as by the end of October 1818 Keats had rejected the idea of a "wordsworthian or egotistical sublime" (KL, 2, 387). By then, the rapidly evolving Keats was a very different poet from the one who had penned Endymion, and yet Keats's constant testing of fictions--especially those that construct a possible self and relation to the world--was a poetic interest from the outset of Endymion, which is strongly aware

that the "bowers" of romance fiction all too readily surrender their idyll back to the "o'er darkened ways" of the reality of human existence.

Critical controversy over the relationship between the Preface of Shelley's Alastor, its narrator's dedication to the "Great Parent" of nature (45)[16], and the tragic retelling of a young poet-figure's doomed quest, bears witness to the ambivalent stance the poem takes towards Wordsworthian aesthetics and psychology. Like Keats's opening sequence in Endymion, Shelley's Alastor is immediately aware of itself as a fiction. Both poems establish themselves as tales that are to be recollected by their respective narrators. Alastor's main narrative commences, "[t]here was a Poet..." (50), and Keats's narrator starts his tale with, "I / Will trace the story of Endymion" (1, 34-5). Equally, the dedication of Alastor's narrator hints at the poetic need to go beyond the retrospective myth-making of Wordsworth. Shelley's narrator actively embraces the "o'er darkened ways" that the narrator of Endymion unsuccessfully attempts to resist:

> ...I have watched
> Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
> And my heart ever gazes on the depth
> Of thy deep mysteries. (Alastor, 20-3)

Shelley's narrator knows all too readily the dark tragedy of investigating the "deep heart of man" (49) and pursuing nature's "shadow and the darkness of...[her]...steps" (21), so that he might force her "to render up the tale of what we are" (28-9). For Alastor's narrator, at least, the meaning of human existence is locked within nature's vast

framework, because what sustains his explorations into the "deep heart of man" is the "dark hope" that nature one day will reveal to him her "inmost sanctuary" (32; 38). Although Shelley's narrator gives more direct emphasis to the darker aspects of nature's "deep mysteries" (23), they are included only after what appears to be a rehearsal of a Wordsworthian fiction of universal harmony and "beloved brotherhood" (1). Alastor opens with the narrator's apparent account of his mutual upbringing with the changing skies, seasons, and wildlife (which he is proud to call "my kindred" and "beloved brethren" (15; 16)) under the watchful eye of nature, his "Great Parent":

> If our great Mother has imbued my soul
> With aught of natural piety to feel
> Your love, and recompense the boon with mine... (2-4)

This fiction of communion with nature gains credence from its echoes of the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and its portrayal of the narrator as a Wordsworthian student of the natural world, whose "heart ever gazes on the depth / Of thy deep mysteries" (22-3). Although the narrator does invoke nature as his "Great Parent", there is little evidence to suggest that he is either particularly favoured by the "great Mother", or that he is privileged to any of nature's deepest secrets. It is questionable from the start, because of the conditional "if", whether the narrator has ever had his soul "imbued...[w]ith aught of natural piety". What on the surface appears to be a Wordsworthian myth of communion (which unites opposites through the narrator's union with nature, so that he is at one "[w]ith sunset and its gorgeous ministers / And solemn midnight's tingling

silentness" (6-7)) turns out to disclose the limitations of this kind of fiction. The narrator's initial invocation of the "Earth, ocean, air..." (1) underlines Shelley's intentional echoing of Wordsworth's poetic diction:

> Not for this
> Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
> Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
> Abundant recompense. (85-8)
>
> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit... (93-100, my italics)

In "Tintern Abbey" the absence of youthful vitality, "time...[that]...is past" (83), and the more immediate five-year absence of Wordsworth from the Wye valley are all compensated for and consoled by the poet's awareness of the Spirit of nature. Shelley's narrator (like the narrator's proem to Keats's Endymion) deliberately weaves his elegy for the poet-figure from the existing poetic fabric of Wordsworthian language. Neither Keats nor Shelley endorses Wordsworth's retrospective myth-making; instead they invoke it through their narrators in order to foreground the

ambiguities present in Wordsworth's fiction, and develop their own ambivalent attitudes towards this type of myth-making. Both Keats and Shelley wanted to move beyond Wordsworth's underlying metaphysical premiss that nature was the "soul of all..[our]... moral being" (110-11), but at this earlier stage of their poetic careers were unsure about what kind of poetry they would write to displace that of their literary forefather. Certainly, their narrators suggest the possibility of a transition to a poetry of "dark passages" rather than a consolatory fiction more concerned with the processes of its own creation and the fashioning of a self-identity than the finished poetic creation that asserts hopefully, "that all which we behold / Is full of blessings" (134-5). Keats's narrator asserts a romantic bower of "quiet breathing" only to have it troubled by the stifling confusion and darkness of reality and, similarly, Shelley's re-enactment of Wordsworthian union does not produce a fiction of consolation, but a state of isolation. The "deserted" (44) narrator is left stranded in the "solitary dome" (43), forever awaiting nature's "breath" to inspire and fill him with the universal rhythms of life. Alastor's narrator clings to the "dark hope" that nature, in Wordsworth's words, will permit him to "see into the life of things", a hope which is desperate precisely because the "tale of what we are" remains an "incommunicable dream" while the world remains "unfathomable"(39; 18):[17]

> I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
> May modulate with murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forests and the sea,
> And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
> Of night and day, and the deep heart of man. (Alastor, 45-9)

Ironically, the narrator's continued belief in Wordsworthian consolation and communion is not rewarded. Instead, it leads to the realisation that adherence to the Wordsworthian myth has both tethered the narrator to the mutable world and isolated him from nature's "inmost sanctuary". What becomes of paramount importance are the kind of fictions which different individuals choose to create, as the invention of a particular fiction affects their own self-perception and relation to the universe. Shelley's narrator, "[l]ike an inspired and desperate alchymist" (31), seeks to concoct a fiction which will illuminate the "voice of living beings" (48) as well as his own. The narrator's chosen fiction at some point may have enabled him to catch fleeting glimpses of the sublime "truths" concealed by nature amongst her "twilight phantasms" and "deep noonday thought" (40), but at present, like a "deserted fane" (44), he is untouched by these mysterious insights.

This kind of myth-making discloses its own precarious existence. Its fragile illusions might collapse at any moment; worse still, their woven metaphors might become established as binding metaphysical "truths". Fictions, poetic or otherwise, have the potentiality to cast light onto the human condition as much as they mystify and shroud existence in darkness. What is always clear is the importance of these fictions to an individual's understanding of self and its relation to the universe. Conversely, it is an individual's desire for self-knowledge which originates the impulse to invent these different fictions, as a means to explain and interpret the phenomenal world, so that they can establish within it what their particular place, purpose, or function might be. The narrators of Endymion and Alastor highlight, in particular, the limitations of Wordsworthian

myth-making and, more generally, the ambivalent tensions present in the process of generating fictions.

Alastor's poet-figure spends his "early youth" in a manner strikingly similar to that of the poem's narrator (75), as nature's "vast earth and ambient air / Sent to his heart its choicest impulses", which leads to his active pursuit of her "most secret steps" (69-70; 81).[18] Shelley's poet-figure is driven by an insatiable desire for knowledge, thirsting after both nature's sublime secrets and the "truths" to be found amongst the past fictions and myths of humanity:

> The fountains of divine philosophy
> Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great
> Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
> In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
> And knew. (71-5)

At the outset of the narrative the poet-figure is already distanced from the rest of humanity by his otherworldly ability to participate in the realm of "solemn vision...and bright silver dream" (67) and the companionship he seeks with the animal kingdom which allows him to make the "wild his home" (98-106; 99); an isolation firmly underlined through the narrator's earlier reminder that "[n]o human hands with pious reverence reared" the poet's "untimely tomb" (50-1) and his succinct lament, "[h]e lived, he died, he sung, in solitude" (60). The poet-figure's desire for self-knowledge stems from his heightened awareness of himself as an individuated consciousness, acutely aware of his difference from his fellow beings and the phenomenal world.

Neither "divine philosophy" nor the lessons of past "fable[s]" quench the poet-figure's desire for self-knowledge, they serve only to heighten his profound sense of alienation and prompt his "fearless steps" (79) into "undiscovered lands" (77). Their fictions fail to measure up to the expectations of his "solemn vision...and bright silver dream". The poet-figure's emergence from the idyllic trance-like state of his "infancy" (69) represents a change from passive reception of nature's "choicest impulses" (71) to an active search for meaning amongst the ruins of ancient civilisation, spurred on by his yearning to satisfy "high thoughts" (108). This vast geographical exploration becomes an archaeological excavation of early human history and its beliefs, as the journey undertaken is as much temporal as topographical, as much historical fact as mythical. On the poet-figure's itinary are Athens (109), Jerusalem (110), Memphis (110), Ethiopia (115), and even "the fallen towers of / Babylon" (110), all of which he plunders in search of the "strange truths" (77) he believes will measure up to the expectations of his ideal nurturing and unlock the secrets of the universe. Reality must satisfy his thirst for knowledge in the absence of the "bright silver dream" of childhood, or alternatively it must be subjected to the idealising fiction of this dream and shown to be inadequate:

> ...[B]ut ever gazed
> And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
> Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
> The thrilling secrets of the birth of time. (125-8)

Alastor's poet-figure gains an insight into the "secrets of the birth of time" by ransacking human history for former understandings of the self and its relation to the universe, particularly through his solitary contemplation of the Egyptian "eternal pyramids" or the "mutilated sphynx" (111; 114), the "wild images / Of more than man" (117-8), and the "[z]odiac's brazen mystery" (119). This contemplative study of ruins requires the poet-figure to reconstruct--from the "mute thoughts on the mute walls around" and "speechless shapes" (120; 123)--former astrological and religious fictions to test whether or not they will satisfy his "vacant mind" that has lost and yet is continually haunted by the ideal visions of his childhood nurturing.

Locating the origin of time may set the poet-figure apart from Alastor's narrator[29] (to whom the hieroglyphs "strange / Sculptured on alabaster obelisk, or jasper tomb..." (112-4) remain unintelligible and the "thrilling secrets" of time hidden), but ultimately it underlines his own personal sense of loss and intellectual dissatisfaction with the reality encountered during his quest. The poet-figure's isolated enquiry enables him to complete the fragmentary ancient signs--giving a "voice", as it were, to the "speechless shapes"--by restoring their meaning. Although the poet-figure can ascribe meaning to the hieroglyphs, reality can never realise his ideal visions and so fulfil his idealised expectations. The poet-figure's ability to renew meaning to these hieroglyphics reinforces his increasing awareness of reality's inability to affirm any validity for the ideals he holds sacred.

Shelley's visionary poet-figure discovers himself to be at odds with reality. Keats's Endymion is another youth troubled by dreams and visions, which cause him to strain beyond the phenomenal world in search of a higher

transcendental plane of existence. Increasingly "[a]lone and sad" (1, 477), Endymion's contemplation of the otherworldly causes him to withdraw from communal activities and is reminiscent of the poet-figure's alienation in Alastor:

> But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
> Like one who on the earth had ever stept--
> Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,
> Frozen in that old tale Arabian. (Endymion, 1, 403-6)

In accordance with Keats's revisionism towards Shelley's Alastor, Endymion's distracted state is the product of an "airy trance" (1, 585) in which he encounters--after a magical chariot ride--the beautiful goddess, Cynthia. Endymion's romance quest takes its point of departure from the tragic death scene of Shelley's poet-figure, as the vision of Cynthia's "naked comeliness" (1, 615) is pre-empted by Endymion's glimpse of the "loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er / A shell for Neptune's goblet" (1, 592-3). Keats's scene inverts that of Alastor's isolated and weary poet-figure who exhales his last feeble breaths beneath a "great moon, which o'er the western line / Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended" (646-7), so that even at his moment of death he is still haunted by the possibility that her "two lessening points of light" (654) might be the "beamy bending eyes" (179) of the dream maiden he sought. Despite the juvenile sexual overtones of Keats's portrayal of Endymion's transcendental encounter with Cynthia it is both life affirming--pointing towards a potential higher "second self" (1, 659)--and a reminder to Endymion of his own "desperate mortal" state (1, 661).

A conflict between mortality and immortality highlights the tension present in Alastor and Endymion between their protagonists' yearning for an immutable, absolute, and idealised existence and their encounters with the "o'er-darkened ways" of the tragic and mutable human condition. Shelley's "graceful" (106) poet-figure emerges from an illusory chrysalis of the "bright silver dream" initially unaware that this "silver vision" (316) is ultimately inextricable from "solemn vision". Shelley's poet-figure needs to learn what Keats's Endymion knows all too well, that a "'dream within a dream'" (1, 633) gives way to "nothing" and "stupid sleep" (1, 678). The "journey homeward to habitual self" (2, 276) is made at the expense of realising his immutable "second self" (1, 559). Self-exploration and the uncovering of self-knowledge are dependent upon the invention of these idealising and redemptive fictions which both make the "disappointment" and "anxiety" of "human life" bearable (2, 153-9) and risk disclosing their own fictive natures and revealing the dark reality of human existence:

> There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,
> And thoughts of self come on, how crude and sore
> The journey homeward to habitual self!
> A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
> Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
> Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
> Into the bosom of a hated thing. (Endymion, 2, 274-80)

These elusive fictions appear as hopeful spots of light which, like a will-o'-the-wisp, flit through the murky air to be madly pursued as a guiding "lantern" that will light the way to a safe haven. Ironically, if

the "flitting lantern" of one of these idealising fictions is successfully pursued it turns out not only to be illusory, but to have betrayed the self to the "hated thing" it sought to escape. This is certainly true of Endymion's dream of immortal union with Cynthia, because his waking from the "sweet dream" (1, 677) is a betrayal to a phenomenal world from which he is totally alienated. He is unable to weave a Wordsworthian fiction of solace to ease his loss:

> Away I wander'd--all the pleasant hues
> Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
> Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
> Were full of pestilent light... (1, 691-4)

Alastor's poet-figure awakes from his hopeful dream of the "veiled maiden" (151) to experience a feeling of isolation, emptiness and lack of consolation for the loss of his own self-projected fiction in response to the failure of the phenomenal world to affirm his ideals. When the poet-figure wakes to the "cold white light of morning" (193) "[h]is wan eyes / Gaze vacantly on the empty scene" (200-1) and "vacant woods" (195). The poet-figure, having found the phenomenal world inadequate to his initial "bright silver dream"[20], and incapable of filling the painful vacancy of the human condition that troubles him, imposes onto the world his own idealised fiction of a primal "beautiful shape" (211), only to be cheated by his own illusion and returned to a world more barren and bleak than it was before. Reality is always at odds with ideal expectations:

Whither have fled

The hues of heaven that canopied his bower

Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,

The mystery and the majesty of Earth,

The joy, the exultation? (196-200)

When the poet-figure and Endymion awake from their dreams of beautiful maidens--ultimate projections of their idealised fictions of truth--it is not that the empirical universe has altered for the worse. In their state of dejection they represent the ordinary world through negative poetic language to emphasise the loss of their unfulfilled visions. The absence of the evaporating visionary maidens is translated into a negative poetic fiction in which nature is no longer construed as a mediator of the transcendental and eternal, but as a constant reminder of human mutability and the inevitability of death, what Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" terms "[r]eality's dark dream".[21] Endymion creates his own fictional prison-house of "[d]eepest dungeons", where once he had idealised the joys of nature; Alastor's poet-figure can only image the brilliant iridescence of a rainbow as its own negation, portraying it as a symbol of despair and death:

Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,

And pendent mountain seen in the calm lake,

Lead only back to a black and watery depth... (214-5)

Shelley's poet-figure and Keats's Endymion are alienated from their respective communities--the poet-figure leaves an "alienated home" (77) and Endymion is so distant "from the whole multitude" (1, 308) they fear "young Endymion..[might]...pine away" (1, 184). The sense of difference from others and the world around them leads them to the contemplation of a transcendental "truth", glimpsed during moments of intense vision.

Both Alastor and Endymion depict a conflict between fictions of the ideal and the harsh circumstances of the ordinary and real, between the heightened sense of self-knowledge attained through visionary modes of consciousness and the self-deception of the illusory, and between desire for a distinct identity and the impulse to recapture a primal oneness. Endymion's awareness of his individuality threatens to extinguish forever the light of "golden-tongued Romance" ("On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again", 1) and to destroy outmoded pagan myths of "old piety" (1, 130) taught him as a child. Ironically, given the fact that Endymion has been raised amongst the romance world of pagan ritual, at one with "nature's lives and wonders" (1, 105), it is he who threatens its "quiet bowers" of romance by adhering to the Apollonian dictum of seeking self-knowledge:

> Apoll[onian][22] culture..must first overthrow an empire of Titans and slay monsters, and...have triumphed over an abysmal and terrifying view of the world and the keenest susceptibility to suffering through a recourse to the most forceful and pleasurable illusions [Scheine]. (BT, 43)

Nietzsche's diagnosis of the relationship between the Apollonian and Dionysian myth-making dynamic points towards a definition of the

oscillating patterns of light and darkness in Endymion and Alastor. Endymion's desire to fashion a distinct sense of self--rooted in his sense of difference from others of his community--produces a supplementary fiction of a higher transcendental self, in which "true" identity is realised by a melting away from the horrors of dark "human serpentry" (1, 821):

> ...an orbed drop
> Of light, and that is love: its influence,
> Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
> At which we start and fret; till in the end,
> Melting into its radiance, we blend,
> Mingle, and so become a part of it... (1, 807-11)

This fiction separates Endymion from the selfish ways of his fellow beings by asserting a belief in the greater nobility of humanity. The light of "love" redeems man from "human sepentry" by opening "our eyes" to a higher purpose and goal. Dark reality is no longer a threat, because once touched by love's "novel sense" mankind is absorbed into the "radiance" of its transcendental realm. Such fictions are necessary to the continuation of human life in a dark and mutable universe, as the Apollonian world of "powerful and pleasurable illusions" suppresses and supplements the Dionysian awareness of incurable human tragedy:

> ...[S]o that now reversing the wisdom of Silenus we might say of the Greeks "to die soon is worst of all for them, the next worst--to die at all."...At the Apoll[onian] stage of development, the "will" longs so vehemently for this existence... (BT, 43)

The appearance of the Indian Maid to Alastor's poet-figure and Endymion's encounter with Cynthia, resepctively, discloses the fictive nature of these idealised women. Shelley's poet-figure ominously pursues the "bright shadow of that lovely dream" (233), hinting to the narrator's audience that the Apollonian world of light, order, and harmony must itself be overreached. Idealised fictions, like all other interpretative fictions of the universe, as Nietzsche argued, conceal as much as they reveal:[28]

> The brightest clarity of the image [des Bildes] did not suffice us, for this seemed to wish just as much to reveal something as to conceal something. Its revelation, being like a parable, seemed to summon us to tear the veil and to uncover the mysterious background; but at the same time this all-illuminated total visibility cast a spell over the eyes and prevented them from penetrating deeper. (BT, 113)

A single swan "[s]caling the upward sky" (278) provides an ambiguous counterpart for the poet-figure's pursuit of his visionary "strange light" (265). The "[b]eautiful bird" (281) is able to ascend to airy heights that represent for him the transcendental realm to which he aspires and, yet it also serves as a reminder of his alienated state and human limitations. The poet-figure's idealising fiction of the "Spirit more vast..." (287) gives way only to the darker fiction of an unresponsive earth and a "desperate hope" (291):

> "'And what am I that I should linger here,
> With voice far sweeter than thy dying tones,

Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?'" (285-90)

Once again the ordinary and visionary merge with one another, as the patterns of light and darkness coalesce in the quest for the "bright shadow". In Nietzschean terms, "Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus" (BT, 130). Shelley's poet-figure is pained by the difference between his own solitary state and the shared existence of the swan with its "sweet mate" (282) for life, and isolated by the indifference that nature displays towards him. The bird navigates its "bright course / High over the immeasurable main" (278-9) without any regard for the poet-figure's plight. This treacherous experience of rejection and dejection leads to the poet-figure's attempted suicide, motivated by an attempt to re-create the Apollonian dream state--in order to recapture his self-projected ideal--by embracing an eternal state of sleep in the form of death. The "desperate hope" of Alastor's poet-figure is that an encounter with Dionysian "lone Death on the drear ocean's waste" (305) will end his sense of difference from a vacant universe by recapturing a state of primal oneness, essential to the Apollonian ideal he has sought and failed to discover in the empirical world.

Equally, Keats's Endymion depicts a quest through a procession of shifting fictive bowers, in which Endymion experiences both the illusory bright vision of the Apollonian and the dark tragedy of the suppressed Dionysian. For instance, Endymion's glimpse of the moon as a "tiny point of

faery scymetar" (4, 499) gives rise to a vision of Cynthia, who "bow'd into the heavens her timid head" (4, 502), and, finally, to the despair of "her body fading gaunt and spare / In the cold moonshine" (4, 507-8). What at first appears to be an ultimate vision of primal oneness--the ending of difference--for Endymion, collapses into the tragic realisation that his Apollonian impulse for self-knowledge has finished in the most extreme illusory state, self-delusion:

> Straight he seiz'd her wrist:
> It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,
> And, horror! kiss'd his own--he was alone. (4, 508-10)

Endymion's visionary sighting of Cynthia's "bright signal" (4, 500) reveals the self-deception present in the Apollonian illusory state, returning the youth to his own solitary state amongst "[d]ark regions" where the soul "can trace / Its own existence, of remotest glooms" (4, 516; 514-5). Apollonian illusion belies its own fictive nature and reveals to Endymion the Dionysian tragedy of human life, which he, like Alastor's poet-figure, constructs in the Cave of Quietude a negative fiction of absence and vacancy:

> Dark paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
> Of health by due; where silence dreariest
> Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
> Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
> Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep. (4, 538-42)

Keats's depiction of Endymion's sighting of the moon's "diamond peak" (4, 497) and subsequent dejection echoes the poet-figure's haphazard midnight and moonlit arrival, in Alastor, at the cavern's entrance (352-4; 363-4), where his encounter with the Spirit is pre-empted by his renewed persistence to attain "'Vision and Love!'" (366). Shelley's poet-figure, in spite of the darkness and despair of failure that plague him, never stops asserting and re-asserting during his life an idealised fiction of transcendence in the face of "[r]eality's dark dream". This is the poet-figure's destiny, to reformulate the Apollonian illusion against the Dionysian, because for better or for worse "He images to himself the Being whom he loves" (Preface, 14). The tragedy in Alastor stems from the apparent ignorance of the poet-figure, who pursues the hopeful visions of love and harmony not as life-preserving fictions of his own invention, but as emissaries of an attainable otherworldliness. Narcissus-like the poet-figure gazes at his fading reflection "in the dark depth / Of that still fountain" (471-2) at the very moment that his Apollonian fiction breaks down into a similar self-delusory state experienced by Keats's Endymion:

> A Spirit seemed
> To stand beside him--clothed in no bright robes
> Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
> Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
> Of grace, or majesty, or mystery... (479-83)

Shelley's poet-figure conceives his vision of the Spirit in yet another negative fiction, which is devoid of the brightness and lustre of the other emanations of the "silver vision". There is a direct correlation between

the physical deterioration of the poet-figure, whose eyes are filled with a "wan light" and whose body has become a "shadowy frame" (470; 416), and the fading of the "enshrining light" which accompanies his vision. The Apollonian illusory light is almost entirely enveloped in Dionysian darkness, save for two pinpoints of light which are preserved only at the expense of the poet-figure's great mental exertion:

> ...and evening gloom
> Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming...
> Were all that was,--only...when his regard
> Was raised by intense pensiveness...two eyes,
> Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought... (485-90)

Alastor's poet-figure is caught in the endless task of supplanting one vision with another, as each illusory fiction points toward its fictive origins and the chaos of the dark, confused, tragic Dionysian mode it struggles to erase, or forget. The poet-figure's moments of most intense vision occur in Spenserian bowers--the "natural bower" in the "vale of Cashmire" (147; 145) and the "cavern" with its enclosed dell of "Silence and Twilight" (455)--suggesting his attempt to elide reality in his quest for transcendental "truth" and the impossibility of the poet-figure establishing--and discerning--through a "single image" (Preface, 14), or fiction, the immutable "truth" of the universe. After all, a poet-figure who "images to himself the Being whom he loves" inevitably perceives the cosmos as a continual stream of self-projected and changing fictions. This risks a collapse into an existential crisis and a state of solipsism in

which, to borrow from Nietzsche's understanding of the Dionysian, "everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness" (BT, 36). What Endymion terms the "goal of consciousness" (2, 283) is the product of the Apollonian impulse to individuation and can be satisfied by its exact opposite mode, the Dionysian, which has the capacity to end the sense of vacancy and difference present in the apparent harmonic order of the Apollonian. No matter how intensely a dream reality is felt there always remains an awareness of it as illusion; or as Nietzsche writes:

> ...[E]ven when this dream reality [Traumwirklichkeit] is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is mere appearance [Schein]. (BT, 34)

Shelley's visionary bowers are tainted with the reality from which they try to shield the poet-figure, as Keats's "quiet bowers" are never far away from the "o'er darkened ways" in Endymion. Unlike Keats's Endymion, Shelley's poet-figure becomes increasingly like a Dionysian priest who, according to Joseph Raben, "re-enacts the sufferings and death of the god he serves" and is punished for witnessing the epiphany of his god.[24] Although Raben's mythological framework demands a didacticism that fits uneasily with much of Alastor, it does help to highlight an important difference between the plight of the poet-figure and Keats's Endymion. The stifling darkness, despair, and mutability which oppress Alastor's poet-figure until the grave contrast with Endymion's enchanted exit with Cynthia, as "[t]hey vanish'd far away!" (4, 1002).

In spite of the difficulties of constructing a clear narrative sequence from Endymion's journey of littered allusions, Keats is eager to

ensure that this youth does not pine away through a self-destructive pursuit of a transcendental idea. Consequently, when Endymion encounters the lonely and distressed Indian Maiden, he displays an unselfish love and relinquishes his search for the divine Cynthia in order to become her "sad servant evermore" (4, 301). Unfortunately, Endymion's displays of selfless love turn out to be rather arbitrary, as his encounter with Glaucus is purely accidental and, even after he has sworn service to the Indian Maiden, he continues to pine after the transcendental Cynthia; in fact, during in his service to the Indian Maiden Endymion verges on solipsism and suffers his greatest depression, wasting the day away in a "soft poppy dream" and carving the design of a crescent moon and stars on tree bark (4, 786-9). Regardless of these narrative inconsistencies, Keats ensures his poem's close witnesses the revealed Cynthia united with Endymion, her lover, and his sister, Peona:

> Next Cynthia bright
>
> Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night:
>
> Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown
>
> Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon. (4, 996-9)

If Endymion was supposed to have learnt greater empathy with his fellow beings, it would seem that he did not make a very good student. Having achieved communion with the transcendental, he once again abandons the web of human relations and the "gloomy wood" to which Peona returns (4, 1003). The illusory dream reality of the Apollonian is literalised by Endymion's effective apotheosis "by some unlook'd for change" and "decrees of fate", so that he can "[b]e spiritualiz'd" (4, 992; 990; 993) and escape

the mutable world of his "mortal state" (4, 991). Yet the world he abandons by Keats's poetic sleight of hand is left much darker by his absence. Even at the moment Endymion makes its greatest bid to assert a magical fiction of transcendence, it points back towards the vacant, dreary, mutable world of human existence.

Shelley's poet-figure has not "vanish'd" from reality like Endymion, but is engulfed by its darkness, extinguished like a brilliant flame. The physically weak poet-figure dies a solitary and tragic death, literally affirming the misery of reality by becoming an "image, silent, cold, and motionless" (661):

> Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
> That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
> Eclipses it, it was now that wondrous frame--
> No sense, no motion, no divinity--
> A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
> The breath of heaven did wander--a bright stream
> Once fed with many voiced waves--a dream
> Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever...
> (663-70)

The death of Alastor's poet-figure not only affirms the tragedy of human mutability, but contributes to reality's darkness, as the world grows much darker when his "wondrous frame" is stifled from existence by "night and time". This affirmation of the "utterly black" (660) Dionysian mode evokes the presence of the illuminating and transcendental Apollonian mode through a negative fiction of its absence. Neither the Apollonian images of

the westering "sunlight" nor the "bright stream", in spite of their apparently dazzling brilliance, are actually present because they have already been eclipsed. Shelley's "ere the west / Eclipses it" is only a momentary stay of execution for the poet-figure as the "ere" struggles against all hope and time's relentless passage, to defer the inevitable victory of death and darkness over the poet-figure.

Although Keats's poetic tone in Endymion wavers between play and seriousness, it does point to a "gloomy" world changed for the worse by Endymion's vanishing, leaving Peona abandoned--in spite of Cynthia's unconvincing promise that they will "meet...many a time" (4, 996)--and Latmos without its rightful heir and leader. Endymion's union with his transcendental Cynthia becomes Keats's optimistic attempt to ensure this youth does not "pine away" as Shelley's poet-figure does. Alastor's more sceptical narrator understands the strange tragedy of the poet-figure's death in the poem's final lines, but he offers no consolation; instead he indicates that the universe is irrevocably altered by the poet-figure's absence:

> ...leaves
>
> Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
>
> The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
>
> But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
>
> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
>
> Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. (715-20)

Alastor's narrator is at his most sympathetic when he speaks these elegiac lines. At this moment narrator and poet-figure seem at their

closest to one another, as is indicated by the imagery of harps awaiting divine breath to bring their music to life. The narrator is equated at the poem's start with a "moveless...[and]...long-forgotten lyre" (42), offering a parallel with the poet-figure's final state as a "fragile lute" abandoned by the "breath of heaven". Through the lyre imagery narrator and poet-figure are, ironically, united by their acceptance of a meaningless existence which ends only in death.[25] In response to the poet-figure's death Shelley's narrator weaves his own negative fiction, forbidding tears through their evocation and condemning the writing of elegiac "high verse" (707) in the act of writing his own elegy for the "Poet". Effectively, the narrator's elegy re-enacts the strategy of negative fiction-making resorted to by the poet-figure in answer to his persistently failed transcendental expectations:

> Art and eloquence,
>
> And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
>
> To weep a loss that turns their light to shade. (710-12)

This recognition of a "woe too 'deep for tears'" produces a negative fiction, exquisitely expressive of a grief "too 'deep...'"--or beyond--the power of language. "Art and eloquence" fail to offer a consolation to those who remain in a world made darker by the poet-figure's loss, because they are only capable, for all their beauty and majesty, of reminding those left how much darker reality has become. Shelley's narrator strains beyond a retrospective Wordsworthian fiction of consolation, favouring a tragic affirmation of human tragedy and loss, in which language is poignant precisely because of its floundering in the face of negative fictions. The

narrator's elegy is a complex negation of itself; firstly, the grief caused by his absence from the universe finds expression in the negative trope of absent tears and, secondly, its series of negative tropes constitutes the kind of "high verse" that it dismisses as mere "Art and eloquence". This, as Keats became increasingly aware, was the dark otherside to the brilliant illusion par excellence asserted by Endymion's storyteller and Alastor's poet-figure.

No matter how much the solitary visionary in these poems advocates the transcendence of the mutable world and quests for what lies beyond the phenomenal world--stretching language's elasticity almost to breaking point--he does so at the peril of becoming like the alchemist "[l]one as incarnate death" (681), who asserts his vision regardless of his experience in the physical universe. Shelley's image of the alchemist becomes an ironic negative inversion of the earlier visionary bowers encountered by the poet-figure:

> O, that the dream
> Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
> Raking the cinders of a crucible
> For life and power, even when his feeble hand
> Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
> Of this so lovely world! (682-6)

Even when death's "last decay" robs the final breath of life from the "dark magician"--like the poet-figure--ever hopeful of attaining the immutable and transcendental, he struggles to assert his Apollonian dream, as if it "were the true law" of the universe, in spite of all his contrary

experience in the empirical world. The alchemist's experimental attempts to concoct the eternal elixir of "life and power" result not in immortality, but the physical wrecking of his body. Unlike the beauteous form of the poet-figure, which gradually decays and fades during his quest, the alchemist is already "dark" and "feeble". These negative fictions ensure that language remains meaningful in the face of a double absence and negation.

Shelley's poet-figure and "dark magician" alike adhere to their idealised dreams as though they provided a "true law"; they seem unaware that their visions do not transform the phenomenal world and lead only to the quickening of their own deaths. Alastor's imagery suggests there is a dark tragic Dionysian mode beyond the visonaries' illusory Apollonian dream by interpenetrating patterns of light and dark. Yet the poet-figure and alchemist remain until death oblivious of the inter-connection between the Apollonian and Dionysian modes. Although Keats's Endymion prefers to tread amongst innocent pastoral bowers, he is conscious that the Apollonian dream can surrender the visionary to the "bosom of a hated thing". In contrast, Shelley's poet-figure continues to project his dream vision, as "two lessening points of light", still ignorant of the fact that it is this "silver vision" which hastens him towards death and the reality he seeks to transcend.

Self-transformation is sought by Alastor's poet-figure through projection of an idealising fiction onto the surrounding universe, whereas Keats's Endymion advocates dissolution into a state of "no self-passion or identity" (4, 476). Despite the indeterminacy of Alastor and Endymion's strategy of narrative confusion, what emerges from comparison between these two poems is the beginning of differences between Keats's and Shelley's

treatment of the self and the poetical character. Their treatment of the interplay between an idealised dream mode with the tragedy of waking reality.

Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" adopts the technique described above as "negative fiction" in its complex exploration of the relation between dreaming and waking, transcendental sublimity and the mutable world of ordinary experience. Enchanted by a "fairy's child" whose "eyes were wild", the "knight at arms" (1) is apparently united with the otherworldly and yet this union is not the joyous one eventually experienced by Endymion. Having been enthralled by the wiles of the "fairy's child", Keats's knight is left hovering in an indistinct mode of existence--caught between dreaming and waking--as a "woe-begone" figure (2; 6) in a landscape characterised by negativity and absence:

> And this why I sojourn here,
> Alone and palely loitering,
> Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
> And no birds sing. (45-8)

Negation and absence pervade even the knight's description of the "fairy's child" as her magical and fleeting beauty--a composite of memory and imagination--is only glimpsed in his retrospective account of her fading memory:

> I <u>met</u> a lady in the meads,
> Full beautiful, a fairy's child;
> Her hair <u>was</u> long, her foot <u>was</u> light,

And her eyes were wild. (13-16, my italics)

Enticed by her gentle "fairy's song" and "language strange" (24; 27) the knight is led to the familiar Romance motif of the visionary bower, in this case, a fairy creature's "elfin grot" (29). Similar to the many bowers encountered by Endymion and Shelley's poet-figure, the "elfin grot" is a location where the protagonist experiences a dream-vision, although the knight's vision is strikingly different from those of Keats's earlier romance:

> And there she lulled me asleep,
>
> And there I dream'd--Ah! woe betide!
>
> The latest dream I ever dream'd
>
> On the cold hill's side. (33-6)

Keats's knight finds no solace or consolation in his dream-visionary experience. Rather than providing hope for a belief in the transcendental and otherworldly (represented here by the "fairy's child"), the dream ensures the reverse transition from the enchanted "elfin grot" to reality's "cold hill[...] side". This dream-vision reinforces the horror of ordinary reality, stressing its absences and shortcomings, and so fails to elevate the dreamer to a higher plane or mode of consciousness. Like the beautiful lady who both entices and enthrals the knight, the dream has all the promise of great pleasures--the knight is "lulled...asleep" by a lovely fairy creature--and yet abandons the dreamer to a desolate reality in which the recapturing--or re-invention--of the "fairy's child" is impossible. No consolation is discovered by the dreaming knight, because the emptiness of

his story's climactic dream episode underlines the vacancy at the heart of his retrospective narrative account, which in turn points toward his own vacant and abandoned existence:

> I saw pale kings, and princes too,
> Pale warriors, death pale were they all;
> They cried--"La Belle dame sans merci
> Hath thee in thrall!" (37-40)

Death and absence characterise all the other noble men, who have fallen victim to the wiles of the fairy creature. Deceived by what they, too, thought would lead to fulfilment and union with a higher reality, they instead have become impoverished as the synecdoche of "starv'd lips in the gloam" indicates (41). Despite the knight's claim that "I awoke and found me here" (43), Keats's poem never satisfactorily defines clear distinctions between waking and dreaming, recollection and invention, or even in the knight's case, life and death. The anguish of Keats's knight leaves him "Alone and palely loitering" in an apparently wakeful state, which is similar to the condition of the "death pale" noble men in his dream. The fairy creature encountered by the knight is, in part, a product of mental recollection and, partly, the result of imaginative creation[26]--or what otherwise might be termed Apollonian fiction-making. Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" occupies a transitional stage between waking and dreaming, life and death, the idealised illusory and more sceptical interpretations of reality, the Apollonian and Dionysian.[27]

This blurring of these distinct modes of consciousness and existence rehearses a problem to which Keats persistently returns in his poetic

career, centred on the question of "[w]as it a vision, or a waking dream?...Do I wake or sleep?" ("Ode to a Nightingale", 79-80). Keats's fiction-making produces enchanted "faery lands" not in order to transform the self and the world into an idealised dream, but to examine the self's fiction-making processes. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" explores the nature of its own modes of consciousness and the fictive frameworks it employs to interpret the phenomenal universe. Writing about Keats's more sophisticated and ironical use of Romance in "Isabella", Rajan formulates a precise diagnosis of Keats's use of the dream-vision:

> Keats acknowledges that dreams are not foreshadowings of the "material sublime" which liberates us into the country of the rainbow, but are a mental repetition of anxieties present in the real world, a disclosure rather than a transformation of the self... (DI, 110-11)

Keats's fascination with alluring fairy creatures (ranging from the divine Cynthia, to the mysterious belle dame and later, the seductive "Lamia") reveals that his aspiration toward these imaginatively created symbols of the otherworldly--a reality in which the self realises its immutable potentiality--were more often than not inter-woven with an awareness of reality's darkness; in Endymion's terms these imaginative encounters are prone to triggering a bewildering "journey homeward to habitual self". Even in Endymion, Keats strives to stress a return to the ordinary sphere of tragic human life after an imaginative flight; there he was troubled that the wonderous fairy creature of imagination could easily conceal the mischievious nature of a "fog-born" or "deceiving elf" ("Ode to

a Nightingale", 74). Endymion's renunciation of the illusory prefigures Keats's ambiguous attitude to the belle dame, capturing both the amazement and desolation experienced by the abandoned knight:

> My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
> Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!
> And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
> Of visionary seas! No, never more
> Shall airy voices cheat me on the shore
> Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast. (4, 650-5)

These imaginative voyages sail brilliant "visionary seas", hoping to discover a "shore / Of tangled wonder" but risk being shipwrecked by siren-like "airy voices", or smashed by a darker reality's "monstrous swell". When he wrote the odes, Keats had learned that illusion's "cloudy phantasms" were inextricable from the tragedy of human existence. To open romance's "[c]harm'd magic casements" is to gaze, for the poet of the odes, upon a beautiful illusion which, ultimately, is a reminder of human anguish. For Keats, awareness of human tragedy is heightened by sailing the "perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn" ("Ode to a Nightingale", 69-70). So the imaginative "country of the rainbow" is tinged by melancholy, and human sorrow must "glut" itself upon a "rainbow of the salt sand-wave" ("Ode on Melancholy", 15-16).

Keats's imaginative voyages involve a continual return to the mutable and ordinary self which, altered by its imaginative experience, affirms the tragedy of its own existence. Human existence becomes apprehended as a bitter-sweet experience that, in Keatsian terms, has a habit of "[t]urning

to poison while the bee-mouth sips" ("Ode on Melancholy", 24). This more developed dualistic view is latent in Endymion's negotiations between light and dark, illusion and reality and the Apollonian and Dionysian modes, where the universe is never transformed, or transfigured, but the tragic beauty of human existence affirmed. This interplay between Apollonian and Dionysian modes is represented by Peona, who is abandoned in reality's "gloomy wood", filled with the light of "wonderment" (4, 1003).[28] Keats's knight, like Peona, is unable to create a Wordsworthian fiction of consolation to soothe his abandonment. Instead he produces a negative fiction that can only disclose the ambiguous nature of his tragic predicament, but never transform his existing state. Keats's poetic subject emerges as the nature of his own subject so, according to Nietzsche, he is like "the weird image of the fairy tale which can turn its eyes at will and behold itself" (BT, 52).

What is central to Keats's handling of the romance genre is his treatment of self-invented fictions and their attempts to define new relations with the universe. Individuals struggle to come to terms with a cosmos in which myths of consolation, like those of Wordsworth, have lost their resonance. Romance, for Keats, is a literary mode of countless possibilities unable, as Harold Bloom remarked, like love itself, to define precisely what it is; able only to signpost what it yet might become.[29] Keats discovers in romance this rich potentiality and a literary terrain that--after a rejection of Wordsworthian consolation--might permit a re-orientation to an aesthetic which embraces tragic reality.

Alastor's poet-figure expires torn to pieces on reality's "jagged hills" for the sake of his illusory "silver vision", as if with his final breath he makes one last desperate gesture to transfigure the universe into

the otherworldly reality he has sought all of his mortal life. The poet-figure's idealised fiction seems to have been intended as a programme of transformation for the phenomenal universe, but fails to understand that the weaving of his own self-invented fictions would constitute a "figured curtain" of his own, capable of rending the veil to reveal--or invent--a possibly illusory "being within our being" (SPP, 505).

Consequently, Alastor's poet-figure remains unaware that his negative fictions have an effect on the physical world, hastening his physical decline and inevitable demise. This is symptomatic of his failure to understand that "He images himself the Being whom he loves" (Preface, 14). Shelley's poet-figure is incapable of transfiguring the self and the world, because he is unable to express his idealised fiction in a "single image" (Preface, 14), which would otherwise give body to his conception and transform the way the self and universe is apprehended. If Shelley's poet-figure's failure to find an adequate metaphorical vehicle for his idealised conception perfectly exhibits the Defence's definition of poetry as "a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it" (SPP, 491), he never understands that the "being within our being" is partly discovered and, more importantly, partly created through a self's fiction-making process. This lack of comprehension causes the poet-figure to be dissatisfied with the illusory mode of the Apollonian, forcing him to seek some greater primal force or truth beyond his dream-vision. Regrettably the poet-figure's actions only surrender him to the tragic mutability of the Dionysian mode, whilst he clings to the torn tatters of the illusory. It is the poet-figure's desperate struggle to rend "life's dark veil" by embodying his Apollonian dream--which he believes to be an essential universal truth--in a "single image" that exquisitely

demonstrates Nietzsche's understanding of the conflicting emotions an Apollonian mode causes in the observer; on the one hand, the "all-illuminated" Apollonian symbol "cast[s] a spell over the eyes" and, on the other, it "summons us to tear the veil" (BT, 140).

If "life's dark veil" can be withdrawn--or even rent--then the self and the cosmos can be transformed, but this is only possible by finding a "single image" which partially expresses and partly creates a new apprehension of the relations between the self and the universe. In Alastor the poet-figure's childhood is "nurtured" by a "bright silver dream" which feeds, or instigates, his desire to pursue the sublime and transcendental at all costs in the hope of transforming the universe. Ironically, Alastor's poet-figure does transfigure the cosmos, not through a realisation of the illusory, but rather by a tragic alteration of the "web of human things" brought about through his death. Sadly, only Alastor's narrator and the poem's audience--and not the poet-figure--are aware of this transformation, which affirms suffering and mortality over joy and immortality. Shelley's early use of dream-visions places emphasis on the transformation of the self and world, rather than a Keatsian fictive disclosure of the self's fiction-making process and nature. Despite Keats's preference for a strategy of disclosure and Shelley's inclination towards transformation, both Endymion and Alastor affirm a profoundly tragic and human world.

Shelley was no less conscious of the anxieties of humanity than Keats and yet, not unlike Alastor's poet-figure, he seems determined, regardless of the risks involved, to chart the topography of the "country of the rainbow". To undertake such an exploration was to step into the otherworldly terrain beyond "life's dark veil", into the transcendental

mode of existence experienced in The Witch of Atlas. This tour of the otherworldly opens with an account of the witch's parentage and a childhood comprised of a succession of magical self-transformations, initially as a "vapour", then flitting "clouds", followed by a "meteor" and, finally, "into one of those mysterious stars" (65-6; 69; 71). These metamorphoses are made to appear more numerous by Shelley's inclusion of extended simile to elaborate each particular stage of transformation; for example, the "cloud" is compared with "splendour-winged moths about a taper" (54). One of the witch's strengths is her ability to alter her appearance, she is simultaneously an illuminating figure "garmented in light" and a form concealed from onlookers within her own brilliance (81). When the witch becomes conscious that her beauty is too splendid for mortals to gaze upon--as it makes "[t]he bright world dim, and everything beside.../ like the fleeting image of a shade (137-9)--she weaves a veil so that ordinary mortals can glimpse a shadowed sight of her transcendental beauty:

...and she

As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skillfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove--
A shadow for the splendour of her love. (148-52)

Weaving becomes symbolic of creating fictions, as the witch's preoccupation with this pastime is synonymous not only with the veil that conceals her real nature from mortals, but with the art of a storyteller, who brings together a variety of narrative threads through a rendition of a

tale. But any weaving of a "figured curtain", like the illusory mode of the Apollonian, risks unravelling itself and exposing its own fictive nature. Effectively, the witch's association with weaving emphasises her visionary beauty and hints at the fictitious nature of her own existence:

> ...broidering the pictured poesy
> Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
> Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
> In hues outshining heaven--and ever she
> Added some grace to the wrought of poesy. (252-6)

Shelley's witch, with her extraordinary beauty, is able to "grace"--or transfigure--mortals' poetry with some portion of the immortal, yet her weaving "[o]f some high tale", as The Witch's narrator subtly and persistently stresses, is an indication that she is no more than a fiction. The Witch's storyteller deliberately threatens to unravel the threads of his narrative; on several occasions reminding his audience that the tale of the witch is only reported by him, as it has been handed down through the ages, by slipping into his account, "['t]is said" (65; 585). The Witch's narrator takes care to outline the confusing and conflicting versions of the creation of her boat, whether it was wrought by Vulcan, or scooped out of a plant nurtured by Love (stanzas 31-2). Doubts are cast upon both versions by the narrator, who interjects with "others say" (297).[30] Distanced from the reader, ironically, by the passage of time and the mortal narrator's framework, the witch's ability to resist mutability is seriously questioned. Even the witch's visionary state cannot be free of the ordinary and, indeed, her supposed existence beyond the cycles of birth

and death reduce her to a lonely spectral observer of human affairs. Although the witch appears to rescue the most beautiful from the clutches of death, she only transports to a plane of existence--similar to her own--which is neither life nor death, waking nor dreaming, male nor female (for the witch is "like a sexless bee / Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none" (589-90)):

> Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
>
> With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
>
> And living in its dreams beyond the rage
>
> Of death or life... (611-14)

The witch's attempts to free the beautiful, through her unweaving of the "woven imagery / Of childhood's swaddling bands" (605-6), result only in a death-in-life state which recalls Keats's abandoned and forlorn knight in "La Belle Dame". These attempts to transform the state of affairs in the mutable world under the cover of night's darkness, or through influencing dreams--particularly her consummation of the "timid lovers" (stanza 77)--serve as a continual reminder of the witch's own sexless state. Shelley's witch attempts to rectify her sterile existence by weaving from "fire and snow" (321) a companion to share her immortal realms, only to create a hermaphrodite which mirrors her own sexual sterility:

> A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
>
> It seemed to have developed no defect
>
> Of either sex, yet all the grace of both... (329-31)

This hermaphrodite might appear a passive and automated companion for the witch but, by virtue of her prodigious nature, it is superior to her creator.[31] The hermaphrodite is a closer representation of the poetic imagination than the witch, because it can pilot her creator's boat, which "in joyous expectation lay" (320), through the world of nature.[32] The hermaphrodite's skill leads to a feeling of ill-ease about the witch's desire to participate in the dim mutable world of mortals. Such a participation can only ever be mediated by her own creations, or dreams, and so the witch, like the rescued beautiful souls, is confined "beyond the rage / Of death or life" (613-4):

> We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
> Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
> Our course unpiloted and starless make
> O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal:--
> But she in the calm depths her way could take,
> Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
> Beneath the weltering of the restless tide. (546-52)

"We" implies that the storytellers and poets are the "weak mariners of the "wild surface", who weave their ill-navigated courses (or spin their meandering yarns) to get closer to their "unknown goal[s]". Storytellers and poets can only ever struggle to represent an approximation of the ideal, because the "bright bowers" remain forever obscured or hidden from them by the "billows roll" and they can never plunge beneath the surface into the witch's "calm depths". Yet the witch's "bright bowers" are not a release from the "restless tide" of ordinary life, as her "calm depths" are

constantly disturbed by an awareness of her own sexless, barren state and an inability to transform the death-in-life state characteristic of the "immortal forms" who dwell with her in the depths. These "weak mariners", who carelessly navigate their criss-crossing courses, appear to undertake fruitless journeys for "unknown goal[s]", but on closer examination, even though their existence is confined to the "wild surface", their lives are more fruitful and productive than the witch's own "[b]eneath the weltering of the restless tide".

Like Alastor's poet-figure, the witch is never conscious of the exact source of her dissatisfaction. Instead, the tensions of her existence are ironically played out in the very weaving of the poetic vision of her "rainbow country". The Witch forces another collision between visionary ideal and ordinary reality. Shelley's witch yearns to participate in the world of human affairs, as much as mortal "weak mariners" seek a reprieve from the cycle of life and death, and a place amongst her apparently tranquil depths. Reality's turbulent troubles can only ever be submerged---or suppressed--by a momentary idealised vision before their "restless tide" re-surfaces doubly powerfully, reminding us of the precarious "[u]npiloted and starless" course of human existence.

Keats's story of Lycius's encounter with Lamia exposes, on one hand, a mask of sensual illusion and, on the other, an illusory sense of order imposed by a philosophical system:[33]

> ...Do not all charms fly
>
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
>
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
>
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given

> In the dull catalogue of common things... ("Lamia" 2, 229-33)

What endangers Lamia's strangely enchanting existence is Apollonius's desire to define and contain her nature within his philosophical "catalogue of common things". In spite of Lycius's love for the fairy creature he cannot entirely shed his mentor's "philosophic gown" (1, 365) and persists in trying to confine Lamia's identity to a single "name":

> "Hast any mortal name,
> Fit appellation to this dazzling frame?" ("Lamia" 2, 88-9)

Such an impulse to "catalogue" existence will inevitably fail to categorise Lamia's elfin nature (a colourful blend of human and animal, lover and demon, mortal and immortal), which appears outwardly as a series of dissolving "silver moons", eclipsed by shades of "vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue" (1, 51; 48; 52-9). Both Apollonius's and Lycius's final naming of Lamia as "a serpent!" reduces her to an inhuman "frightful scream" (2, 306). The fairy creature's carefully woven illusion is undone by the "cold philosophy" of mentor and student alike. Naming Lamia, ironically, exposes Apollonius's false claim that language truly represents the world, because Lamia's loss of illusion produces a "gordian shape" (1, 47) not of her former majesty, but a reptilian creature with impassive "orbs" for eyes and a "horrid presence" (2, 267). Apollonius's "cold philosophy" does not give Lamia back her fairy form, but instead constructs an empirically based vision of her as a serpent. Apollonius and Lamia are not diametrically opposed; rather they are two distinct aspects of the Apollonian mode of illusion and order. Apollonius represents an impulse

towards self-knowledge and Lamia is aligned with the illusory dream of the Apollonian mode. Neither Apollonius nor Lamia are willing to confront the fictional status of the order they impose upon the world.

Apollonius becomes a treacherous weaver of wizardry, entangling Lamia in his own illusory spell of philosophy, to conjure her up as a hideous parody of her former self and denounce her as a "'foul dream'" (2, 271). Lycius's initial response recreates Apollonius as a demonic trickster:

> "...Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
> "Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
> "Mark how, possess'd his lashless eyelids stretch
> "Around his demon eyes!" (2, 286-9)

Lamia's "purple-lined palace of sweet sin" (2, 31) is another illusory retreat from Dionysian reality. An elaborate product of the Apollonian mode, it is as suffocating as Apollonius's restrictive philosophical education of Lycius:

> '...from every ill
> 'Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day!' (2, 297-8)

Lamia's palace, for all its apparent abundance, is ultimately sterile and imitative, characterised by an artificial "pervading brilliance and perfume" (2, 174) and its "mimicking...[of]...a glade / Of palm" (2, 125-6). Even Lycius's journey--or rather magicking away "by a spell" (1. 345)--to Lamia's haunt suggests a state of sleep-walking which blurs distinctions between waking and dreaming, knowing and doing:

> They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
> So noiseless, and he never thought to know. (1, 348-9)

At first glance, Corinth appearing to Lycius "[a]s men talk in a dream" (1, 350) might suggest he is embarking upon a transcendental voyage, when actually, he is receding from reality into a superficial bower of sensual pleasure. Lamia does not escape her "'wreathed tomb'" (1, 38), exchanging incarceration within her serpentine body for imprisonment within her self-constructed palace, held hostage by Corinthian society. Lamia's blessing and curse is to live out her existence within her illusory private realm. To recognise Lamia's fictional status is to unravel her own mode of existence, disclosing a Dionysian awareness of individual terror and tragedy hidden previously by her Apollonian illusions.

Lycius links these two kinds of Apollonian modes in Lamia, fulfilling both the role of philosophical apprentice to the cerebral Apollonius and passionate lover to the sensual Lamia. The youth dies disillusioned, forced to acknowledge that Lamia and Apollonius are two different kinds of "deceiving elf" ("Ode to a Nightingale", 74). Lycius is unable to weave his own illusory fiction of consolation to come to terms with this lesson and make his life bearable. His death at the close of the poem is a macabre representation of the Apollonian dream mode disclosing its Dionysian counterpart. A public ceremony of marriage should have united the lovers, but instead it separates them forever, as the act of matrimony leads only to the preparation of Lycius's funeral. The Apollonian illusion of order collapses into Dionysian chaos and tragedy, symbolised by Lycius's "marriage robe" becoming his death shroud (310):

On the high couch he lay!--his friends came round--
Supported him--no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound. (2, 309-11)

The stifling and exclusive fictions of Apollonius and Lamia are translated into actual tragedy. Not even Lamia's exquisite illusory dream mode can elide death's Dionysian reality, which bursts in upon her secluded palace when the Corinthian wedding guests arrive (a reminder of human reality beyond Lamia's enchanted circle). Lamia cannot exist isolated forever from Corinth in her Apollonian dream mode, because to possess a "body fit for life" (2, 39) demands an acceptance of human tragedy and death. The lovers' retreat into an artificial romance bower is violated by exterior social pressures, symbolic of darker forces repressed by Lamia's magical existence.

In Keats's The Eve of St. Agnes, Porphyro and Madeline apparently elude a tragic encounter with social pressures by eloping (not undertaking a public ceremony of marriage) and escaping undetected from a castle's hostile society. Such a positive reading of the lovers' elopement suggests that their escape is one from the dark reality of the castle's interior to an ideal exterior existence beyond the confinement of its walls.[34] But the castle is only a set for the narrative's dramatic action, intended to enhance The Eve of St. Agnes's fairy-tale atmosphere. The interior of the castle is not entirely dark, because its inhabitants and structure conspire with Madeline and Porphyro. Their escape is aided by a benign beldame, an ineffectual "bloodhound", "bolts [which] full easy slide" and "chains [that] lie silent on the footworn stone" (365-9).

Keats's lovers do not retreat from Dionysian reality into an Apollonian dream mode, even if their story is absorbed into legend's ideal and immutable realm. Instead Porphyro and Madeline flee from a magical castle's safe haven--itself a product of Apollonian illusion--into a troubled "storm" of Dionysian reality (371). The treachery of their flight into a dawn storm can be gauged from Porphyro's optimistic description of it as an "'elfin-storm from faery land'" (343) which, recalling Endymion's perilous "fog-born elf", anticipates a return to a "habitual self" and reality's darkness. The youthful lovers fail to transcend the perils of human existence, because whether they remain within or without the castle their fate is anticipated by the beldame and Beadsman:

> Angela the old
>
> Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
>
> The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
>
> For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold. (375-9)

Central to The Eve of St. Agnes's negative fiction is Madeline's unrealised dream and sexual encounter with Porphyro. The poem's gothic interior is sterile, cold, and lifeless, consisting of a series of inarticulate "carven imag'ries" (209), marking out the fairy-tale castle as "old romance['s]" (41) last bastion and final tomb.

Like Madeline performing her rite of "St. Agnes' Eve" (46), Porphyro's expression of love for Madeline verbally re-enacts a courtly legend captured in "an ancient ditty, long since mute" (291). Both lovers attempt to translate "old romance" of an Apollonian mode meaningfully into the present (46). Madeline lapses into silence, as her attempt to re-enact

courtly tradition leads to her being "hoodwink'd with faery fancy" (70) and incapable of one "uttered syllable" (203). Even when she wakes from her charmed sleep she is only able "to moan forth witless words with many a sigh" (303). Despite being within the castle's safe haven, Madeline's dream is not a consolatory Apollonian illusion, rather a disclosure of "old romance's" fictional status. This dream experience discloses an awareness of absence, desertion and unfulfilment, reflecting the Apollonian mode's adoption of a Dionysian language of negative fiction. Madeline's new found speech--echoing Keats's abandoned knight--desires an idealised "old romance", prefering her own imaginatively created Porphyro over his actual presence:

> "How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
> "Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
> "Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!" (311-13)

Porphyro's recitation of "'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'" reduces him to an immovable and silent form (305-6), intimating that he and Madeline will be absorbed into a tradition of courtly legend. Porphyro resembles the castle's decorative stonework, which depict the world of "old romance":

> Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone. (296)

The Eve of St. Agnes's portrayal of an idealised romance and dream threatens at every narrative instance to unravel itself, laying bare the darker elements of Dionysian reality banished from Keats's enchanted

castle. Porphryo will be absorbed into a tradition of heroic lovers when his actions are consistent with being a voyeur, skulking in a "closet" (164-7), and appearing to Madeline's eyes as "'pallid, chill and drear'". Not even in this fairy tale world is Porphyro ascribed the role of handsome prince and legitimate suitor. Instead, he is an inexperienced paramour who makes "jellies soother than the creamy curd" (266) rather than love. Porphyro only serves Madeline with luxuriant and exotic dishes in an attempt to overwhelm her pervading sense of absence with sheer abundance. Yet Madeline's Dionysian realisation that life is "'eternal woe'" (314) cannot be avoided. The lovers' sexual encounter is framed between Madeline fearing for Porphyro's death and Porphyro hearing the "iced gusts" of an "'elfin-storm'" (327; 343):

> At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
> Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
> Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
> Into her dream he melted... (317-20)

Keats's portrayal of their love-making, as an idealistic and Apollonian union between Madeline's dream of Porphyro and his actual presence is an act of supplementation[35], which points towards a deathly absence, represented by those darker forces lurking beyond the walls of Keats's fairy-tale castle. Silence and death remain a constantly deferred threat to the lovers, even after they have "fled away into the storm" (371). The narrative projects their escape into the past of immortal legend to preserve them against the ravages of time, represented by the beldame and Beadsman. The Eve of St. Agnes moves full circle from the lifeless

existence of the Beadsman to the hopeful fulfilment of youthful love (or the recovery of Apollonian "old romance") to return only to the inevitable reality of death. A retelling of Porphyro's and Madeline's legend will once again conjure up and break the castle's charmed circle, exposing its own tentative existence--undoing the spell of its enchanted spot--to disclose what tragedy its Apollonian mode struggles to conceal.

Keats's retelling of Boccaccio's medieval romance deliberately discloses the precarious existence of the idealising visionary mode. "Isabella"'s modern narrator establishes a direct relation between the tragic love affair of the poem's two lovers and the active retelling of their story.[36] Readers are forced to share not simply in the initial delight of the lovers, but in the responsibility of the discovery of their secret by Isabella's brothers, as their secret meeting place is revealed to them by the narrator:

> All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
>
> Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
>
> Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
>
> Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
>
> Ah! better had it been for ever so,
>
> Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe. (83-8)

This romantic bower, for all its atmosphere of closed secrecy and concealment in the half-light "before the dusk", is to be engulfed in the darkness of a tragic "woe". The reader is implicated in this "woe" in the reference to the "idle ears" that will share and have shared in the "many doleful stories" (93). Keats's narrator ensures this bower of Apollonian

illusion is explicitly aware of its own fictional attempt to conceal the tragic Dionysian mode, so the modern and gothic nature of "Isabella"'s narrative is forced to disclose itself. Similarly, the lovers' secrecy, or the secrecy of the brothers' "jealous conference" (169) to murder Lorenzo, or Isabella's secret re-planting of her lover's head in the basil-pot (stanza 52), are also disclosed through a retelling of Boccaccio's tale. Boccaccio's original story becomes, for Keats, a symbol of a fast-fading traditional romance genre, which is about to be displaced by his own darker, ironical, and often, black-humoured account of the ill-fated love affair of Isabella and Lorenzo:

> O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
> Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon...
> And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
> And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
> Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,
> For venturing syllables that ill beseem
> The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme. (145-7; 149-52)

Lorenzo returns (from beyond the grave) to pay a midnightly visitation to Isabella, appearing as a spectre to divulge the secret of his murder. The ghostly Lorenzo hovers on the edge of human existence as a "pale shadow" (281), who enacts a gothic death-in-life state, with "cold doom / Upon his lips", a "lorn voice" and a "miry channel for his tears" (277-8; 279; 280). Keats's description of Lorenzo's words as a "strange sound" accompanied by a "ghostly under-song", ensures the voice synecdoche

displaces the description of his physical state (287), so that the his of Lorenzo's earthly semblance can be substituted for the supernatural and neuter form:

> Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
> With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
> From the poor girl by magic of their light,
> The while it did unthread the horrid woof
> Of the late darken'd time... (my italics, 289-93)

Enthralled by a pair of eyes, rather like Keats's knight, Isabella does not produce a consoling fiction of the illusory Apollonian dream mode. Lorenzo's visitation reveals her brothers' dark deeds, his own dishevelled appearance, and withdraws to leave the "atom darkness in a slow turmoil" (322). Despite the tragedy and horror of the situation, conscious bathos pervades "Isabella"'s narrative tone, so that Lorenzo's account of his own under-handed death appears as, on "the sodden turfed dell / Where, without any word, from stabs he fell" (296), or his love's grief and exhaustion amounts to, "[i]t made sad Isabella's eyelids ache" (327). Such bathetic comments prepare the way for Isabella's transfixed gaze into Lorenzo's eyes to pass into her later fixation with a basil-pot, containing her lover's recovered head and the plant weaned on her tears:

> ...it drew
> Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
> From the fast mouldering head there shut from view:
> So that the jewel, safely casketed,

Came forth, and in perfumed leafits spread. (428-32)

Isabella's dotage on the "fast mouldering head" dramatises the predicament of the Apollonian visonary mode, persistently blighted by an awareness of the pain and mutability of human existence, which it claims to elide. Lorenzo's decaying head and the growing basil plant become Isabella's only source of focus and consolation, acting as a grotesque parody of the life-sustaining and life-perfecting ideal sought out by the questor of romance. Nurturing the basil plant with "the continual shower / From her dead eyes" may drain Isabella's "drooping" body (452-3; 458), but there is little doubt that, without the preserving solace she derives from its "magic touch" (459), "sweet Isabel... will die" (486).

For Isabella the secret of Lorenzo's concealed head is important, because it substitutes, rather perversely, the secret love she once shared with him, and so when this secret--like that of their love--is discovered and taken by her brothers to a "secret place" (474) Isabella is beside herself with grief. The brothers' appropriation of Isabella's final secret condemns their sister to misery, because she has lost even the decayed and tattered remnant of her secret and private exchanges with Lorenzo, whether earthly or supernatural. Worse still, Isabella's "lone and incomplete" (487) state is a product of what she cherishes most, an intimate secret, although one known only by her brothers, who have fled Florence (476-80). Isabella is destined to spend the rest of her days in search of the "secret place". She never resorts to transcendental fictions of consolation, instead deriving comfort from what can be salvaged of Lorenzo's physical body, in this instance the re-discovery of the hidden basil-pot along with Lorenzo's decomposing head. Even as Isabella descends into insane

obssession, black humour is still present in her "lorn voice", characterised by a "melodious chuckle in the strings" (492; 491). The enchanting and ideal world of romance is forced by Keats's narrator to unpick the poetic fabric of its illusory fictions at every turn, reducing itself to the chant, heard by "idle ears" and passed onto others, "'O cruelty, / To steal my basil-pot away from me!'" (503-4).

Explorations of the alluring literary terrain of romance may have provided the young poets with a greater scope for their unpractised creative powers, but the genre was never, for either Keats or Shelley, a straightforward retreat from the tensions and pressures of reality. Both poets portray visionary anxieties that point towards a haunting of idealised fictions by the reality they feign to elude. These anxieties emerge in the world of romance as a succession of hauntings. Keats's Isabella is haunted by the loss of her murdered lover, his "palely-loitering" knight is forever haunted by an encounter with a faery creature, and Endymion is troubled by the absence of Cynthia. Shelley's witch--in spite of her nightly spectral wanderings--is haunted by the vitality of the world of human affairs and a desire to be a part of them, and Alastor's poet-figure is haunted to his grave by a desire for the transcendental ideal.

Although, Keats adopts a strategy of disclosure to chart the world of Romance and Shelley explores the "country of the rainbow" through a series of transformations, both poets were self-consciously modern in their employment of the romance genre as a means to criticise and play out the tensions and anxieties already present in the romance tradition. Keats and Shelley realised that a fiction of the Apollonian dream mode could so easily collapse into the Dionysian waking nightmare of reality. Out of the

once safe haven of romance's brilliant illusory bowers, Keats and Shelley successfully induce a birth of tragedy.

Notes

[1] JKP, 140, 2, 276.

[2] SPW, 21, 285.

[3] Z, 173.

[4] Greg Kucich, Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1991), 4-5, hereafter referred to as RS.

[5] SCR, 20-1.

[6] See SCR, 27. See also Karen A. Weisman, Imageless Truths: Shelley's Poetic Fictions (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 1994), 31, hereafter referred to as IT.

[7] Stuart M. Sperry, Keats The Poet (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973), 90, hereafter referred to as KP.

[8] Martin Aske, Keats and Hellenism: An Essay (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 63; 66.

[9] Daniel P. Watkins, Keats's Poetry and the Politics of Imagination (Toronto: Associated UP, 1989), 52, hereafter referred to as KPI.

[10] Timothy Clark, Embodying Revolution: The Figure of the Poet in Shelley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 103, hereafter referred to as ER. See also Weisman, who focuses on the self's desire for insight into its own nature and that of the phenomenal world, IT, 24-5. Clark and Weisman both stress the emphasis the poem gives to the potentiality of attaining such an insight suggesting the importance of poetic process and fiction-making in Alastor.

[11] RS, 159.

[12] William Wordsworth. The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Ernst de Selincourt. Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1944), 259, 48. All subsequent quotations of Wordsworth's poetry taken from this edition.

[13] Dickstein offers both a subtle and illuminating comparison between Keats's proem to Endymion and Wordsworth's "account of the workings of memory" in "Tintern Abbey". Dickstein's account overlooks the "o'er darkened ways" present in "Tintern Abbey" and Keats's opening to Endymion; arguing instead that Keats "turned not to the dark Wordsworth...but to the poet of consolation who in "Tintern Abbey" had found 'tranquil restoration'". But Wordsworth's consolation is only attained through a willed creation of a retrospective fiction, which has its origins in the absence of "half-extinguished thought" and "sad perplexity" (58; 60). See KSD, 58-60.

[14] See KP, 81-2; 85-6.

[15] Dickstein rightly equates Keats's recognition of these "dark passages" with a growing awareness of the problems of individuation and self-consciousness. Consequently, his study of Keats (unlike other critical studies) draws attention to the important theme of self-exploration in Endymion, "[which]...is more than a love story. It is about a voyage of the self, a 'strange journeying' (3, 93), whose vehicle is misleadingly called 'love.'" See KSD, 67.

[16] Much critical debate has arisen over whether Alastor portrays its solitary poet-figure as morally culpable and is intended as an outright criticism of Wordsworthian solitude. Some earlier commentators, focusing on the Greek meaning of alastor as "evil genius", have insisted that it is the self-secluded solitary state of the poet-figure that becomes his curse in the form of an avenging genius. For a survey of these earlier readings see

Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of Vision (London: Oxford UP, 1948), 41-60. Wasserman offers a more sophisticated reading of Alastor's anti-Wordsworthian stance, stressing the dichotomy between the poem's narrator and its questing poet-figure to highlight a dialectical pattern between idealism and scepticism. See SCR, 18-34; 41. Weisman values the importance of Wasserman's dialectical reading, although she reformulates the "apparently opposed polarities" as "a life of perpetual uncertainty or a life of trying to predicate tangible attributes of an intangible, metaphysical ultimate". See IT, 27;38. Other critics have maintained Shelley's quest for individual poetic identity through anti-Wordsworthian tendencies without relying on Wasserman's dialectic. See Vincent Newey, "'Shelley's Dream of Youth': Alastor, 'Selving' and the Psychic Realm," Percy Bysshe Shelley: Bicentenary Readings, ed. Kelvin Everest. Essays and Studies 45 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 1-23. See also Michael O'Neill, The Human Mind's Imaginings: Conflict and Achievement in Shelley's Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 11-29, hereafter referred to as HMI. In addition Clark offers a convincing refutation of Wasserman, arguing that the narrator and poet-figure act as analogues for one another. See Timothy Clark, ER, 137-42.

[17] PL, 48.

[18] Timothy Morton has observed that the poet-figure's "break with nature" leads to a "flight into abstract knowledge", which "severs the Poet from social contact". See Morton, Shelley and the Revolutionary Taste: The Body and the Natural World. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 10. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 105.

[19] PL, 51.

[20] IT, 37.

[21] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Coleridge: Poetical Works. 1912. Vol 1. Ed. E.H. Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964), 367, 95.

[22] Walter Kaufmann's translation reads "Apollinian", a term which he employed in his own critical works on Nietzsche. Kaufmann's use of this extraordinary term has been questioned by recent commentators on Nietzsche, who favour "Apollonian" instead. This controversy has been further complicated by a recent appearance of a Penguin translation of The Birth of Tragedy which favours "Apolline" as a term over either "Apollinian" or "Apollonian". For my own purposes I agree with the current critical consensus and have, when quoting from Kaufmann's text, altered in square brackets his term "Apollinian" to "Apoll[onian]". See Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist. 4th ed. (NJ: Princeton UP, 1974), 128-9, hereafter referred to as N. See Julian Young, Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art. 1992. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 27, hereafter referred to as NPA. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music, trans. Shaun Whiteside and intro. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 24.

[23] Tetreault notes a similar irony in Shelley's treatment of redemptive fictions by drawing a parallel with Nietzsche's analysis of fiction. He cites Nietzsche's remark that "Without measuring reality against the purely invented world..., without a continual falsification of the world...mankind could not live..." See PL, 85 and see also BGE, 35.

[24] Joseph Raben, "Shelley the Dionysian", Shelley Revalued: Essays From the Gregynog Conference, ed Kelvin Everest (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1983), 27-8, hereafter referred to as SRE.

[25] SCR, 38.

[26] Leon Waldoff has pointed out that the fairy creature is probably comprised of actual "unacceptable feelings or attitudes to another person or things" disguised by the "silent workings of imagination". He also stresses the uncertainty of the knight's experience and compares this with Keats's own doubts about the imagination's ability to achieve "symbolic restoration". See Waldoff, Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1985), 97, hereafter referred to as KSI.

[27] Douglas B. Wilson makes a similar point about the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", suggesting that "Keats uses the dream to reveal the Dionysiac jeopardy of imagination", 72. See Wilson, The Romantic Dream: Wordsworth and the Poetics of the Unconscious (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1993), 71-4.

[28] Ronald A. Sharp, Keats, Skepticism, and the Religion of Beauty (Athens, GA: Georgia UP, 1979), 103-4; 64; 160, hereafter referred to as KSR.

[29] Harold Bloom, The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971), 34-5.

[30] David Rubin and Andelys Wood offer contrasting accounts of Shelley's The Witch. See Rubin, "A Study of Antinomies in Shelley's The Witch of Atlas," SiR 8 (1968), 216-28. See also Wood, "Shelley's Ironic Vision: The Witch of Atlas," Keats-Shelley Journal 19 (1980), 67-82, hereafter referred to as SIV.

[31] See SM, 199-200.

[32] SIV, 71.

[33] The readings offered here of Lamia and The Eve of St. Agnes have grown out of an earlier reading of a conflict between the "metaphysical" and "metaphorical" modes in Keats's narrative poems. See my "Nietzschean

Aesthetic Self-Construction in the Works of John Keats," M.A. diss., U of Durham, 1994, 14-22.

[34] Dickstein adopts this approach to the poem. Rajan offers a contrasting account to which I am indebted. See KSD, 190. See also DI, 106-9.

[35] Levinson makes this point. See KLA, 144.

[36] Bennett makes a similar connection between writing, reading and responsibility in "Isabella", arguing that one of the poem's other secrets is Keats's subversion of Boccaccio. Dickstein offers a contrasting account to Bennett's reading, arguing that "Isabella" is not a poem concerned with the "private", particularly when compared to "Lamia". See KNA, 90 and see KDL 234; 236-8. See also Kelvin Everest, "Isabella in the Market-Place: Keats and Feminism," Keats and History, ed Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 107-26, hereafter referred to as KH.

Chapter 4

"No Voice Will Tell": Fiction-Making in the Lyrics Of Keats and Shelley.

"No voice will tell..."[1]

(John Keats)

"...[W]hate'er these words cannot express."[2]

(P.B. Shelley)

"...But you do not understand this? Indeed people will have trouble understanding us. We are looking for words; perhaps we are also looking for ears. Who are we anyway?"[3]

(Friedrich Nietzsche)

Transgressive tendencies in lyrical poetry have often been noted by contemporary critics of Romantic poetry.[4] Comparing the Shelleyan visionary lyric with "Satan's transgressive entrance into Eden in Paradise Lost"[5], Michael O'Neill recognises the epistemological and moral limits which the lyric tests. This analogy indicates a consensus of critical opinion about the Romantic lyric as "a test of boundaries"[6] and a destabiliser of singularity. These deconstructive impulses, according to Tilottama Rajan, disclose the "unitary voice as an illusion and [force] us to question the idea of the speaker as...a unified person".[7] Romantic lyrics aspire to be a closed representation of a monologue of a single mind, but constantly

disclose that at some level they exist as open, divergent, and complex dialogues.

Despite a variety of literary approaches to the lyric, many critical representations of this transgressive mode of writing are viewed through a Nietzschean critical lens. Critics have certainly recognised an affinity between the Romantic lyric's deconstructive impulses and Nietzsche's own thought. Morris Dickstein reads the closing stanza of Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" as a "poetic counterpart" to the tragic affirmation of existence in Nietzsche's writings.[8] In contrast, O'Neill understands the Shelleyan lyric as permitting the audience to glimpse the "interplay between what Nietzsche calls 'the lyric genius and the allied non-genius'".[9] Ronald Tetreault turns toward Nietzsche to appreciate the irony that redemptive fictions in Shelley's lyrics "are in themselves a 'nothing'"[10] and Paul H. Fry represents the lyrical poetry of Keats and Shelley as enacting a Nietzschean "transvaluation" (PC, 252).

Nietzsche's influence on critical representations of the lyric mode--and Romanticism at large--extends far beyond a recognition of these textual parallels, as his thought has been disseminated (and enmeshed) in the machinery of critical theory. Rajan's early deconstructive account of Romantic discourse views "To Autumn" and "Ode to Psyche" as belonging to the category "of the defiantly sentimental poem which wears the mask of idealism, having already crossed the threshold from blindness into insight" and Keats's odes as a "deliberately indecisive" group (DI, 98, n.3).[11] For Rajan, the Keatsian lyric, like the Shelleyan, oscillates between light and darkness, unity and chaos, surface and depth, and idealism and skepticism within an Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic which she openly borrows from Nietzsche. Rajan's understanding of the odes as a "mask of idealism" and a

"blindness into insight" (DI, 98, n.3) indicates both Nietzsche's influence on her own work and the dissemination of Nietzsche's ideas into Romantic criticism. Her phraseology recalls the importance of prosopopeia, tropes and rhetoric for Nietzsche and Paul de Man.[12]

De Man's two best known collections of essays, Blindness and Insight (subtitled The Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism) and The Rhetoric of Romanticism, have established rhetorical studies as an important strand of criticism. Like subsequent critics, de Man connects Romantic lyric with Nietzschean philosophy. In "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric" de Man aligns Keats's "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" with Nietzsche's claim that "truth" is comprised of an army of metaphor, metonymy and anthropomorphism (RR, 239). Nietzsche's "tropological definition of truth" is crucial here (RR, 239), as the transformation of trope into anthropomorphism, according to de Man, is both an alliance of rhetorical "truth" with knowledge and a site of impossible conflict between epistemology and the rhetoric of tropes (RR, 242-3). De Man's definition of lyrical anthropomorphism, as an "illusionary resuscitation of the natural breath of language, frozen into stone by the semantic power of the trope" (RR, 247), anticipates recent critical focus on tensions within the lyric between surface and depth, order and chaos. What is central to de Man's account is the irreversible transformation of trope into anthropomorphism; to enact lyrically this metamorphosis is to commit the same grammatical and linguistic transgression as Nietzsche's metaphorical "army of tropes" (RR, 262).[13]

Following de Man's footsteps, Cynthia Chase stresses the ambivalence of tropes in lyric poetry and their tendencies to undo rhetorical illusions; its "appeal to voice leaves precariously evident the rhetoricity, the fictitiousness, of the vital supposition it imposes" (DF, 70). Chase reads

this deconstructive tendency as a sign of a rhetorical crisis, in which lyrical poetic language suffers a double failure and "dismays and deceives us by not deceiving us thoroughly enough" (DF, 70).

Lyric is again diagnosed as a conflictual site where normal poetic, epistemological and linguistic limitations and expectations are deliberately challenged. These transgressive--or transvaluing--acts of the lyrical mode bear witness to lyrical poetry's fundamental impulse to exist above, over and separately from the printed word. Lyric poetry threatens its own stability by aspiring to exist as music. This paradoxical impetus is played out in the mode's transgressive, often contradictory strategies. Lyrical poetry's unified surface veils darker, more turbulent, forces at work. Such a fiction is aware of its own fictionality and use of tropes which speak only through their silence, or through an awareness of their impossible utterance.

Keats's "Ode to Psyche" opens with a plea to the goddess to "hear" and forgive a devotee's words of praise:

> O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
> By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
> And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
> Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
> Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
> The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes? (1-6)

From the outset, Keats's "hymn to imagination"[14] plays out conflicts, contradictions and transgressions typical of lyric poetry. The devotee's appeal to be heard is a vocal one of "tuneless numbers" which is nearly

stifled before it is uttered. These "tuneless numbers" suggest a voiceless silence at odds with the intentions of Keats as disciple to give voice to Psyche's secrets in her "own soft-conched ear". This lack of voice indicates an ontological uncertainty concerning the nature of what occurred, a confusion over whether the event was "dreamt" or truly witnessed. Both how the song to Psyche is to communicate itself and what "secrets" it is to convey are in doubt. Our own and Psyche's "soft-conched ear" might strain forever in vain to hear the "tuneless numbers" of the devotee's song. "Ode to Psyche"'s opening lines are a problematic reminder of the tension between lyric poetry's existence on the printed page which demands to be read and its own aspiration to be musical and heard. Keats is careful to ensure that his audience do not simply scan poetic lines with their eyes, but listen acutely with their own "soft-conched ear[s]".[15]

Doubt over the ability of the devotee/narrator to sing of Psyche's "remembrance dear" reinforces the ode's concern with her waning presence. The ode's first two lines mournfully recall Milton's opening in "Lycidas"[16] and anticipate Psyche's deathly fading, even though she is an immortal. Echoes of Milton's Paradise Lost in the first stanza also pre-empt Psyche's sad plight in the second. Keats as narrator powerfully recreates his accidental stumbling upon, and voyeuristic encounter with, the lovers Cupid and Psyche:

I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on a sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms... (7-11)

Through the narrator's eyes we are permitted a glimpse into the "calm-breathing" (15) and unspoilt world of antiquity and romance. Keats's secluded scene not only recalls Endymion's countless bowers through its myriad scents and shades, but Milton's "blissful bower" for Adam and Eve with its "roof / Of thickest covert" (PM, 4. 692-3), catalogue of colourful flowers containing "Iris all hues, roses and jessamine" (PM, 4. 698), and the smell of "fragrant leaf" (PM, 4. 695). Like Milton's spying Satan, Keats's narrator intrudes upon a peacefully innocent bower--where "lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu" ("Psyche," 17)--with an attempted utterance of words. Humanity's transgression, in Milton's epic, is nurtured by Satan's successful whispering of words into the "ear of Eve" (PM, 4. 800). Psyche's devotee is only able to sing--or rather write--"tuneless numbers" into her "own soft-conched ear", in a manner which recalls Satan's temptation of Eve and reminds the reader that the ode's fiction could be deceiving them.

Keats's Miltonic allusions chart the undercurrents at play beneath "Ode to Psyche"'s calm surface, reminding those who strain to hear of the uncertainty of the devotee's song. Keats's readers are not simply deceived, but implicated in the act of their own deception, as they find themselves trying to discern "two fair creatures" (9) amongst the "leaves and trembled blossoms" (11). They forget that the lovers' bower is an introspective creation of a devotee, or a faded memory of a perceived event.[17] The audience become party to an imaginative recreation of the moment. They place faith in a song which cannot be heard and an incident so lost in the past that its recovery conflates perception and introspection, epiphenomenon and phenomenon.

Keats as poet and devotee celebrates, as does the reader, the possibility that Cupid is united with "[h]is Psyche true" (23). Doubt and uncertainty are momentarily laid aside by a joyful exertion of poetic faith and invention. But Keats's attempt to sustain this confident tone, in the opening of the next stanza, gives way to the doubts, uncertainties, and underlying disbelief of the ode's beginning:

> O latest born and loveliest vision far
>
> Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
>
> Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
>
> Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
>
> Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none... (24-8).

Psyche's "loveliest vision" is praised for exceeding in youth and radiance the other Olympian gods. She outshines both Phoebe the moon-goddess and Vesper's "amorous glow-worm", more commonly referred to as the evening star. What troubles these lines of devotion to Psyche is an awareness of mutability. This passage of time is mapped out in the shift of imagery from the joyful "tender eye-dawn of aurorean love" (20) to the nocturnal figures of Phoebe and Vesper who--threatening to engulf Psyche's brilliance--are a reminder that all Olympians have long since had their day of glory. Olympus is a "faded hierarchy" deprived of lustre and eclipsed by centuries of disbelief and neglect. The devotee's insistence that Psyche excelled any of the other Olympians in beauty leads only to his confession that she was not highly rated amongst them since she has no "temple" dedicated to her (28), "[n]o shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat / Of pale-mouth'd prophet" (34-5). Psyche's predicament is even worse than that

of the other "faded" gods, for if those Olympians who were worshipped have long been forgotten, what hope is there for an immortal whose original followers were so few?

Psyche's antique plight of never being "worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour" was well known to Keats, who could not "let a he[a]then Goddess be so neglected" (KL, 2, 106). Keats deliberately chooses to dedicate his ode to the least favoured and faintest of the "faint Olympians" (42), for whom it is "too late for antique vows" and the "fond believing lyre" (36-7). By devoting his "tuneless numbers" to a lesser known Goddess, Keats suggests his own justification for the continuation of his hymn to Psyche is the need to "make a moan / Upon the midnight hours" (44-5), since she has never had a "virgin-choir" to sing her praises (30).

It would seem fitting that a poet not yet ranked in a literary pantheon should become the mouthpiece for a minor immortal. Keats's audience are "lull'd to sleep" like the "moss-lain Dryads" (57) into a false sense of security, so that they accept the ode's apparent logic and momentarily forget themselves as those who are deceived. This unavoidable complicity with Keats's strategy makes readers transgress coventional norms, as they strain to spy on an absent event and listen for a non-existent music. Psyche is everywhere and nowhere, seen only because Keats as poet and devotee invokes her presence through continual references to sight. At first, the narrator questions whether he did see her "with awaken'd eyes" (6), making the claim that he saw her embracing Cupid (16) and the assertion of Psyche's "loveliest vision" (24), which provides a visual impression without resolving whether the initial event was "dreamt to-day" (5) or actually witnessed. The narrator's final claim to have spotted

Psyche's "lucent fans / Fluttering among the faint Olympians" (41) explores further the tension between writing and singing, reading (or seeing) and hearing:

> I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
> So let me be thy choir...
> Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe... (43-4, 46)

Once again the audience tries to catch a glimpse of Psyche's flitting form, believing her to be the "brightest" Olympian (36), whose beauty will be a source of inspiration. Quite the reverse is true, as it is the narrator's mental eye which creates and inspires Psyche's divine beauty, rather than her form being a source of inspiration for him. Keats is a poet of, and a devotee to Psyche, although ultimately not the Psyche of Olympus, but the psyche of the human mind's imaginative powers, which are capable of dressing a "rosy sanctuary...[w]ith the wreath'd trellis of a working brain" (59-60). To "see" and "sing" are made synonymous with each other, since the figure of Psyche and the song are a product of Keats's own poetic invention. Both Psyche's elusive form and the song's unheard "tuneless numbers" can only be seen and heard if the reader surrenders entirely to Keats's vision of Psyche. The poem's readers might become so transfixed by the beauty of Keats's creation that they would be entranced like a "pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming" (35; 49). Yet the audience can never be these oracles, for as much as it is identified with Keats as poet and devotee, it remains troubled by the ode's previous uncertainties and does not have enough conviction to take up the role of Psyche's "priest" (50):

> Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
>
> In some untrodden region of my mind,
>
> Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain... (50-2)

Keats finally resolves to dedicate himself to Psyche, but it is a commitment to his own imaginative powers and the nurturing of their "branched thoughts", rather than to reinstating a cult for a lesser Olympian. This determination to further his own poetic development may end with Keats's optimistic assertion that he will leave "a casement ope at night / To let the warm love in" (66-7), but it still remains troubled by a much darker and uncertain aspect of imaginative invention. Keats's mental landscape contains "all soft delight / That shadowy thought can win" (65, my italics), recalling again the bower in Paradise Lost[18], and is tended by the "gardener Fancy [who] e'er could feign" (62, my italics), alerting the reader to a further possibility of deception and treachery. The secluded security of this "rosy sanctuary" (59) populated by drowsy Dryads acts not only as a beacon (with its "bright torch" (66)) to the "warm love", but also to all the troubles of the mutable world that are concealed in the night outside its boundaries, beyond the "casement".

Psyche's barely discernible form has vanished in the ode's last stanza. Keats's secure "rosy sanctuary" is more than a reappropriation of Psyche's female figure to the "untrodden region" of a male poet's mind[19], as it reminds us that her "faint" existence throughout the ode is dependent upon Keats's creative powers and poetic faith. The subject of "Ode to Psyche" is the impossibility of Keats's attempt to figure his own poetic soul or creative mind. Keats's mental landscape attempts to supplement Psyche, but has a fragile fictional existence of its own, threatened from outside by

reality's darkness. No adequate figure is found for Psyche, whether as goddess, poetic soul, or creative mind. Even Keats's many visual references, upon closer inspection, mention only her "pinions" (16) and "lucent fans" (41).[20] Keats's hymn to mental creativity can neither be figured nor "sung" (3). The poet's creative powers sustain the ode's existence, but he is unable to reveal the "secrets" of this imaginative process to his own or anyone else's "soft-conched ear" (4).

Psyche has taken flight even before our intrusion upon the lovers' fertile bower, leaving only echoes of her presence to haunt the ode. This gestures at the poet's own essential and elusive creative powers of imagination at work. Psyche's identity as goddess is suppressed so that Keats can try to exercise his new-found poetic confidence and identity. Ironically, Keats must break faith with Psyche if he is to promote his own creative and poetic identity, or rather his own psyche. Yet denying Psyche's identity as goddess prevents Keats from figuring her immortal form or his new poetic identity.

Both versions of psyche are a product of Keats's fiction-making[21] and are still capable of eluding him through the impossibility of their figuration and identification. Nietzsche's description of the poet's role supplies a succinct commentary on "Ode to Psyche"'s conflict between worshipping her beautiful mysteries and revealing her "secrets" to disenchant her, so that Psyche's knowledge and place might be usurped:

> The poet anticipates something of the joy of the thinker at the discovery of a vital idea and makes us desire it, so that we snatch at it; he, however, flutters by past our heads, displaying the loveliest butterfly-wings--and yet he eludes us. (HH, 96)

Whatever profound insight into existence is partially glimpsed through the fictions woven by the poet out of language only reminds the reader that the "artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process" (BT, 49). The lyric poet, for Nietzsche, is foregrounded only so that he can abandon his subjectivity and reveal his "identity with the heart of the world [as] a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and primordial pain" (BT, 49). Essential to lyrical poetry is a transformation of the self, whether through a poet's willed attempt to cast himself anew in his poetic invention, or by his fiction-making challenge to his audience's epistemological and ontological certainties. Both strategies make revelations about the nature of self and are mutually dependent. Lyrical poetry's creative processes have their origin in a desire for self-transformation and self-understanding. Coleridge's comment on Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches printed in Poems (1815), that "[t]he poetic PSYCHE, in its process to full development, undergoes as many changes as its Greek name-sake, the butterfly" (BL, 78) underlines the inextricable link between lyrical process and self-transformation or, in Nietzschean terms, "how one becomes what one is".[22]

"Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" anticipates Keats's difficulty in finding a suitable figure for Psyche. Shelley's "Hymn" evokes an unknown god not listed amongst the common pantheons[23] and so, like Keats's worship of the almost forgotten Psyche, its opening turns on the paradox that this "Power" is omnipresent and always absent:

> The awful shadow of some unseen Power
>
> Floats tho' unseen among us,--visiting
>
> This various world with as inconstant wing

As summer winds that creep from flower to flower... (1-4)

The human and natural realm, which comprises "[t]his various world" of phenomenal experience, is on occasions altered and touched by an "inconstant wing" or "glance" (6) of the "awful shadow of some unseen power". This "unseen Power" mysteriously casts a shadow over the experiential world. Humans only know of the Power's "awful shadow" which "[f]loats unseen among us" because they can perceive its effects in the phenomenal world. For instance, the Power's force is perceived at work behind the invisible "summer winds", moving the flowers' nodding heads. Shelley's use of simile through a repetition of "like" (5, 8-11) makes it clear that the Spirit plays a part in, but is never identical with, the phenomenal world. Shelley's spectral "unseen power" haunts the world, concealed "[l]ike moonbeams...behind some piny mountain shower" (5), or dark "clouds in starlight widely spread" (9). Equally, these attempts to represent and define the Spirit signpost its absence from the world, serving as a reminder that it is only an act of poetic faith--like recollecting a "memory of music fled" (10)--that evokes and believes in its presence. Like Keats's intrusion upon Psyche, scepticism pervades Shelley's imaginative encounters with the "Hymn"'s Spirit, whose presence indicates absence and otherworldliness, pointing to the human world of "[d]oubt, chance and mutability" (31):

...[W]here art thou gone?

Why does thou pass away and leave our state,

This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?

Ask why the sunlight not for ever

Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river... (15-19)

Shelley asserts, in the second stanza, that the "Spirit of Beauty" (13) appears as a fleeting manifestation of the "unseen Power". The Spirit's absence is directly confronted and lamented, for without its presence reality is unbearable and there are no means to "consecrate...human thought or form" (13, 15). Beauty's transience, like the fading rainbow woven out of sunlight, is a reminder of human mutability, casting a shadow over human belief in a transcendental realm beyond their own "dim vast vale of tears". Those who believe in an immutable beauty find the "daylight of this earth" (22) tarnished by "fear and dream and birth and death" (21) and so turn away from human existence, appealing to a higher authority, for an explanation of "[w]hy aught should fail and fade that once it is shown" (20). This appeal to a realm of absolutes defers the possibility that behind all human values there may only be a "vacant and desolate" void. Belief in the transcendent is an alluring balm to "life's unquiet dream" (36), but in one of the "Hymn"'s more sceptical moments, it is rejected out of hand:

No voice from sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given--
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour... (25-8)

"No voice" from a higher reality has ever responded to allay the fears of the "sage or poet" nor answered their questions concerning existence's mutability and humanity's "scope / For love and hate" (23-4). Lacking

affirmation of their belief in the transcendental, poets and sages have invented "the names of Demon, Ghost and Heaven" to fill the "vacant" void they fear would exist if it were proven there were no ultimate reality. This invention of a "Demon, Ghost and Heaven" is all that is produced from the "vain endeavour" of the poet and sage, whose "frail spells" (29) strive to create an otherworldliness:

> ...[W]hose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
> From all we hear and all we see,
> Doubt, chance, and mutability. (29-31)

"[D]ark reality['s]" (48) obstacles of "[d]oubt, chance, and mutability" are overcome at the expense of misrepresenting existence through the fiction-making of sage and poet. Shelley recognises that human belief in a transcendental realm or God is a product of poetic fiction-making, mistakenly established as dogma and actual. These "frail spells" and "uttered charm[s]" are easily broken, when their claim to absolute truth depends upon the authority of their self-invented fictions, which are understood as one of many possible interpretations of reality. Shelley's dogmatic sage and poet are, for Nietzsche, those who:

> ...[C]an find pleasure in life only in the intention of falsifying its image...: one could determine the degree to which life has been spoiled for them by the extent to which they want to see its image falsified...made otherworldly and divine...
> (BGE, 85)

Shelley rejects the "poisonous names" of his youth (53) and their falsification of life. Instead, he favours a poetic language that embraces the transience of "mist o'er mountains driven" (32), "music by the night-wind sent" (34), or "moonlight on a midnight stream" (35), as the "light alone" to give "grace and truth to life's unquiet dream" (36). Shelley's act of imaginative fiction-making is crucial, as it invents figures for the Power, which would otherwise remain "vacant" and leave human existence a "vast vale of tears". After Shelley's rejection of the beautiful as transcendental and objective, he attempts a more personal and subjective understanding of beauty:

> Love, Hope and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
> And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
> Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
> Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
> Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart. (37-41)

Beauty is considered in terms of its "awful", or inspirational, effect upon the observer. Shelley is concerned with the feeling of harmony an aesthetic experience causes in the human mind which, in his view, is synonymous with an increased awareness of the ethical virtues "Love, Hope and Self-esteem".[24] Human apprehensions of beauty may be as evanescent as clouds gathering and dissipating, but in such moments the observer plays an actively subjective part in the perception of what is beautiful and is not passively acted upon by an objective form of beauty with "unknown" origins. After all, a transcendental realm of beauty is simply a product of one kind

of fiction-making, which can be re-invented through an act of poetic faith to "free / This world from its dark slavery" (70).

Shelley's newly modified and intellectual version of the "Spirit of Beauty" has its own anxieties. Imaginative powers are as creative and liberating as they are destructive and enslaving. Shelley's final image of beauty--"that to human thought art nourishment" (44)--is one of engulfing darkness, rather than enlightenment:

> Like darkness to a dying flame!
> Depart not as thy shadow came,
> Depart not--lest the grave should be,
> Like life and fear, a dark reality. (45-8)

This repeated appeal to "[d]epart not" almost convinces the reader of the Spirit's presence when, in fact, it has always been absent, existing only amongst the "Hymn"'s tropes. The poet's plea, "[d]epart not as thy shadow came", reinforces the "Spirit of Beauty['s]" absence-presence, recalling the "Hymn's" first paradoxical and doubly negative assertion that there exists "[t]he awful shadow of some unseen Power" (1).[25] The Spirit is not a torch illuminating reality's darkness, instead "[l]ike darkness" its beauty seals the "dying flame['s]" fate, extinguishing it from existence. Only the "dark reality" of "life and fear" remains, underlining human existence's "vacant and desolate" condition. These lines point to the ultimate absence of death, indicating a vacancy of meaning beyond life and language. Shelley's own personal poetic language of mutability recognises its own fictionality, even as the "Hymn"'s fiction-making tries to fill this vacancy. The "Hymn"'s attempt to cast light onto "dark reality"

through "shadow" is a reminder that the Spirit is a part of existence and a product of a poet's psyche. The poet's pleas to prevent beauty's departure are useless, as the Spirit has already flown away at the start of Shelley's poem.

Shelley's "Hymn" and Keats's "Ode to Psyche" are unconventional dedications, sensitive to the power of beauty and its relation to imagination. Neither Keats nor Shelley dedicates his hymns to commonplace immortals amongst accepted pantheons; they decide instead to address a lesser known goddess and an unknown Power. This liberating manoeuvre permits both poets to humanise and be more sceptical about a transcendental form of beauty. Keats's Psyche verges on death through lack of faith in her and Shelley's Spirit is only expressible through images of mutability and shadow. Both poems oscillate between optimism and scepticism, human mutability and divine immutability, and epistemological certainty and uncertainty.

Keats and Shelley locate beauty in their own imaginative fiction-making, understanding its power as a part of aesthetic experience which requires no outside referents.[26] For Keats and Shelley beauty, even if it is only the imaginative product of a poet's psyche, affirms life.[27] The fiction-making celebrated in Keats's ode and Shelley's "Hymn" exhibits, in Nietzsche's words, "the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant to life" (WP, 3, 4, 853), in their refusal to deny life for a transcendental alternative. Like Nietzsche, Keats and Shelley understand the aesthetic apprehension of beauty as a profoundly human experience:

> Man believes that the world itself is filled with beauty--

> he <u>forgets</u> that it is he who has created it. He alone has bestowed beauty upon the world--alas! only a very human, all too human beauty... (<u>TI</u>, 89 [19])

Keats's "Ode to Psyche" and Shelley's "Hymn" adopt images of mutability to represent their imaginative recreations of Psyche or the Spirit, so that their versions of the beautiful are introspective and include human suffering. For Nietzsche, art must transfigure life into something beautiful, so that it can be life-affirming, even when "art...makes apparent much that is ugly, hard, and questionable in life" (<u>TI</u>, 93 [24]). The tragic, or Dionysian, artist does not seek an idealist escape from existence through a transfiguration of life but, with "[b]ravery and composure in the face of a powerful enemy" (<u>TI</u>, 93 [24]) confronts life's "great hardship" and suffering (<u>TI</u>, 93 [24]). Nietzsche's Dionysian artist embraces the mutable world as an eternal flux of becoming, as "[h]e enters into every skin, into every emotion; he is continually transforming himself" (<u>TI</u>, 84 [10]), accepting that "all becoming and growing...postulates pain...[f]or the eternal joy in creating to exist" (<u>TI</u>, 120 [4]). Tragic art, in Nietzsche's sense, requires both a transfiguration of human existence and a transformation of the artist.

A lyric poet's transfiguration of the world is dependent upon his own imaginative powers, implicating the transformation of his own self in the creative lyrical process in which, according to Nietzsche, "the images of the <u>lyrist</u> are nothing but <u>his very</u> self" (<u>BT</u>, 50). Shelley's concern about the limitations of his own fiction-making are reflected in his hope that "awful Loveliness / Wouldst give what'er these words cannot express" (71-2). At the close of Shelley's "Hymn" his doubt gives way to a "more

solemn and serene" scene of an imagined "harmony / In autumn" (73, 74-5).[28] In the absence of a revelation from the "awful Loveliness" about meaning and the nature of things, Shelley seizes upon this vacancy as an opportunity to exercise his imagination, by creating a consoling and supplementary fiction. Shelley's self-doubt, as in "Mont Blanc"'s final lines, is transformed into a positive assertion of his imaginative powers:

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy? ("Mont Blanc", 142-4)

It is Shelley's fiction-making which recreates the phenomena of the "earth, and stars, and sea" and "Mont Blanc", so that their "[s]ilence and solitude" are meaningful in human terms. The mountain's "still and solemn power of many sights" (128), consisting of "moonless nights" and "voiceless lightning" (130, 137), are unwitnessed by human eyes (132) and subject only to conjecture in Shelley's doubly negative fiction-making. An unwitnessed scene is imaginatively invented from the negative images of "darkness" (130) and silence (135-6) to give voice to the mountain's "solemn power". "Mont Blanc"'s "human mind's imaginings" are conscious of their own fictionality, knowing that their poetic language of consolation may, ultimately, be as "vacant" as the absent "power" of the mountain (127, 128).[29] This vacancy, ironically, is what motivates fiction-making in "Mont Blanc". Shelley endeavours to imagine an order and meaning out of the "everlasting universe of things" (1) which, in the poem's opening lines, threaten to drown the mind with "its rapid waves, / Now dark--now glittering--now reflecting gloom-- / Now lending splendour" (2-4). In

fact, these tumultuous waters of the ravine are no more than another invention of Shelley's "human mind's imaginings".[30]

The imaginatively recreated sights and sounds of these lyrics are often found to be wanting. Darkness constantly threatens to engulf emblems of beauty and power. Shelley's "serene lights of heaven" will be shrouded in "profoundest midnight" ("Stanzas--April, 1814", 4), as the "clouds that veil the midnight moon" are "lost forever" amongst the closing in "[n]ight" ("Mutability", 4), or "the calm darkness of the moonless nights" which threatens to swallow the "lone glare of day" ("Mont Blanc", 131). Equally for Keats, darkness is a trope for absence. In Keats's sonnet "Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell", when he receives no "reply from heaven or from hell" (3) he equates existence's "mortal pain" with "darkness" and a desire to "on this very midnight cease" (6-7; 11). Beyond "[v]erse, fame and beauty" (13) is the ultimate absence of death, which Keats seizes upon as "life's high meed" (14). In absence of a "voice" from "god" or "demon" (1-2), Keats turns to his "human heart" (4) to invent his own consoling fiction, embracing mutability as the impetus of his fiction-making. A "human heart" knows all too well that the Naiad must, inevitably, "darken her pure grot with muddy gloom" ("On Fame", 8). The darkness of the "night" and "shadowy thought" ("Psyche", 65; 66) indicates that the absence of "warm Love" ("Psyche", 67), Psyche and music, inspires Keats's fiction-making in "Ode to Psyche".

Shelley's "Hymn" can never become song because music proves to be as elusive as the Spirit itself, dimly existing in the faint "memory of music fled" (10), or as a ghostly player "by the night-wind sent" strumming the "strings of some still instrument" (34; 33). Such "forgotten lyres" never repeat a "mood or modulation" ("Mutability", 8), emphasising both human

transience and music's absence. Music in Shelley's "Hymn" (recalling Keats's predicament of the "tuneless numbers" in "Ode to Psyche") remains outside of poetical language's expression and beyond the lyric as text on the page. Shelley's gothic fiction of the "voiceless grave" ("Hymn", 65), or the negative fiction of the "voiceless lightning" ("Mont Blanc", 137), is necessary to express the inexpressible Spirit.

Keats and Shelley can only speak of what is unspeakable through tropes of silence, as they endeavour to voice, in Shelleyan terms, "what'er these words cannot express" ("Hymn", 72) and what, in Keats's words, "[n]o voice will tell". This issue is further complicated when Keats and Shelley recreate encounters with works of art, which exist apart from language in a tempting silence of their own:

> Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of silence and slow-time.
> Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
> A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme...
>
> ("Ode on a Grecian Urn", 1-4)

The urn's silence demands a response, accusing Keats of being a voyeur of its "unravish'd" innocence and challenging his skill as poet, because its "Attic shape" (41) can "express / A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme". Keats is both observer and creator of the urn, weaving its "overwrought" shape out of his poetic language. The poet's hasty questions are a necessary assault upon this "foster-child of silence". This questioning begins Keats's verbal creation of what "leaf-fring'd legend" (5) might be seen on the Grecian Urn:

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (8-10)

No reply is made by the urn's "silent form" (44). Keats turns the urn's lack of music from its sculpted "pipes and timbrels" into a vacancy, which allows him to elicit imaginatively a response from the reluctant artefact. Keats's assertion that "[h]eard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter" (11-12), enables a portrayal of the urn's visual representation of its lovers in musical terms, so that the "[f]air youth" (15) is unable to escape his "song" rather than his frozen position on the Grecian urn. Keats's "more endear'd" and imagined music of "no tone" (13-14) provides the means to unfold the lovers' narrative, which would otherwise remain still and silent. This music of "no tone" appears to celebrate the immutability of the "[f]air youth" and his lover, who "cannot fade" (19):

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love!

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

For ever panting, and for ever young;

All breathing human passion far above... (23-8)

The eternal spring of the lovers, which always anticipates "winning near the goal" of consummation (18), is thrown into relief against the temporal and human world of spent passion with "a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd" (29). Yet the excessive repetition of "for ever" and "happy" fails

to conceal a sense of sterility and vacancy about what is depicted on the urn. The lovers avoid the ephemerality of "[a]ll breathing human passion" at the cost of never consummating their love, for the "[f]air youth" can never attain sexual "bliss" (19) and must forever remain a "happy melodist", capable only of making an unheard music rather than love.[31]

Keats's urn does not recommend either of these modes of existence over the other, although what appears to be depicted on its reverse side underlines the death-in-life condition of the lovers. The sight of a "mysterious priest" leading a "heifer lowing at the skies" (32-3) triggers a series of questions: "[w]ho are these coming to the sacrifice?" (31), what "green altar" do they seek out? (32) and, finally, what "little town" has been" emptied on "this pious morn?" (37; 38). Unlike Keats's earlier demands from the "foster-child of silence", which opened up a variety of possible narratives, these questions form a distinct narrative out of their conjectures. This narrative is more explicitly concerned with human existence beyond the urn's death-in-life condition, as the story of the sacrificial procession is comprised of Keats's imaginatively invented future and the past of those who go to the "sacrifice", rather than out of actual details depicted on the urn.[32] Both Keats's imagined future of the "green altar"--never to be arrived at--and the past of an abandoned "little town"--never to be returned to--are clear indications that mutability is a necessary contingency of human existence. The desolation of the "little town" places the urn's sterility and silence within a human context of community:

> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. (38-40)

This imagined otherside of Keats's urn divulges the ode's fiction-making process at work. The "little town" and sacrificial procession are more obviously a product of imagination than Keats's closely observed description of the lovers "beneath the trees" (15). But to make such a comparison is to forget that the accurate detail of the lovers' scene is also a product of Keats's poetic invention. Keats's conjectures, in stanza four, favour the mutablility of human existence over immutability. They elicit an unshared bias from the urn's silent impartiality. The "silent" town, devoid of "a soul to tell", is dependent upon Keats's words for its imagined existence, so that its silence, which ought to be complicit with that of the urn's, gives voice to his own prejudice. Keats is both an observer of a silent artefact in a museum and a craftsman who sculpts out of words the urn's silent existence on the page.

Confronted by this "silent form [that] dost tease us out of thought" (44), Keats adopts tropes of silence to disclose the sterility of the urn's condition, speaking the unspeakability of what "[n]o voice will tell". This disclosure produces both Keats's denouncement of the urn's disengagement with human affairs as "Cold Pastoral" (45) and assertion that its "[a]ttic shape" is "a friend to man" (41, 48). Keats's label of "Cold Pastoral" tries to define--or rather confine--the urn as an antiquity in a museum, silencing the endless speculation its "silent form" gives rise to and which threatens to "tease us out of thought". The Grecian urn cannot be so simply dismissed, as Keats's label with its deathly "[c]old" recalls its original purpose of containing funeral ashes, indicating its rightful place in a social ritual. Keats's urn is "a friend to man", because as a "Cold

Pastoral" it forces us to face all that is, in Nietzsche's terms, "hard and questionable in life". Those who strain to hear the urn's silent message are reminded that "breathing human passion" (28) is only possible in a transient existence and will, inevitably, end in death. Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" makes these hard lessons bearable by offering a consolatory fiction of immutability, which always returns its readers to the human sphere of mutability, aware that its death-in-life condition is an unsatisfactory alternative to living. Put differently, Keats's Grecian urn does not recommend a transcendental escape from reality. Instead it is a reminder of what is valuable about human existence in contrast to the shelter of its "leaf-fring'd legend" (5). Keats ensures that neither the urn nor its aphorism point to ideal beauty as a vehicle for escaping from life's hardships. The inscription, "'[b]eauty is truth, truth beauty'" (49), affirms an earthly and, to borrow from Nietzsche, "all too human beauty" which encompasses existence's pleasures and joys as well as its horror, terror and fear.

Shelley's encounter with an artwork shares Keats's understanding of beauty as a category that incorporates the terrible. "On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery", written in 1819, is more explicitly concerned with the petrifying experience of the observer than Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn".[33] Both of these lyric poems blur their subject and object. They alternate between the artwork as poetic subject and its observer as the subject of the poem:

> Yet it is less the horror than the grace
>
> Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
>
> Whereon the lineaments of that dead face

Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athwart the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain. ("On the Medusa", 9-16)

Shelley, gazing upon a painting of Medusa's silent and decapitated head, which is in turn "gazing on the midnight sky" (1), confronts and is confronted by a demonic version of human desire for ideal beauty. "On the Medusa" focuses on the perplexity and petrification of the "gazer's spirit into stone" at the precise moment Medusa herself is turned to stone. Shelley recreates his experience of the painting through a shift to an imaginative representation of Perseus's encounter with the Gorgon. Shelley's reflection upon the painting produces a reflection upon Perseus's experience. He was only able to witness Medusa's beauty as a reflection in his shield, pointing to the incomprehensibility, unrepresentability and unspeakability of the "[l]oveliness like a shadow" that she possesses.[34] Beneath the absent-presence of Medusa's unrepresentable beauty lurks a further vacancy "of anguish and of death" (8), which "thought no more can trace", as the terrified observer cannot reconcile her "melodious hue of beauty" with "the darkness and the glare of pain".

Shelley's "On the Medusa", like Keats's imagined turning of the urn, confronts the price which must be paid for the attainment of an ideal and immutable beauty. Medusa forever transfixes the observer as she remains eternally transfixed "gazing in death on Heaven" (40), reminding those who look upon her of "[t]he torture and the death within" (23). The Gorgon's fate of petrification is shared by those who dare look directly upon her,

recalling those sculpted figures on Keats's urn and their death-in-life existence. Shelley, unlike Keats's manipulation of his audience's gaze in "Ode on a Grecian Urn", is unable to tear our eyes away from those "Gorgonian eyes" (26), which after all are only a refracted reflection of our own. Entranced by Medusa's "brazen glare" (34), Shelley is caught in a process of endless self-reflection, evolving around the loss of self, death, and horror, necessary to being a devotee of ideal beauty. This process of self-reflection turns into a series of "unending involutions" (21), which trigger an unfathomable maze of tropes, culminating in a transformation of "thrilling vapour" into an "ever-shifting mirror / Of all beauty and terror" (36, 38-9). Medusa's "[l]oveliness" is the inverse of the "awful Loveliness" of the Spirit and cannot "give whate'er these words cannot express" ("Hymn", 71-2). Shelley as observer can do nothing other than stare speechless in horror into an "ever-shifting mirror" of inverted and refracted self-reflections.

What emerges from Shelley's contemplation in "On the Medusa" is a confrontation with the vacant horror that lies behind all of the "human mind's imaginings" ("Mont Blanc", 143). Such a confrontation is terrifying and fascinating, urging the observer both to turn toward and turn away from this vacancy, symbolised by the Medusa with "its horror and its beauty [which] are divine" (4). Shelley's "On the Medusa" offers a more extreme dramatisation of the scepticism present in his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc", as reflections upon Medusa's ideal and unified beauty are forever about to transform into the petrified, decapitated, head of "[a] woman's countenance, with serpent-locks" (39). The unified, perfected, beauty of an immortal gives way to the mortal

tragedy of death, absence, and mutability. Equally, Keats's beautifully crafted surface of his imagined Grecian urn conceals its darker function as a vessel for the ashes of the dead. This terrifying moment of recognition is when the Apollonian mode of ideal beauty reveals and resists its tragic Dionysian counterpart, symbolised for Nietzsche by the "figure of Apollo, [who] rising full of pride, held out the Gorgon's head to this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian power--and really could not have countered any more dangerous force" (BT, 39).

Both Shelley's imaginatively retrospective account of his experience in the Florentine Gallery and Keats's invented recollection of a museum visit dissolve a distinction between the consciousness of the observing subject and the artistic object under observation. Whether imagined or real, these artworks become for Keats and Shelley, symbols which enable a dialogue of the self with the self.[35] When addressing these artistic objects, Shelley and Keats do not find their ultimate value in what glimpses they provide of a transcendental plane as art per se, but in their mediation of the human anxieties and fears of an individual consciousness to itself. The silence of the Medusa painting in the gallery and the Grecian Urn in the museum remind their observers of the emptiness and chaotic flux behind the fictions, which are used to interpret existence and the self. The observing subject is forced to confront its own annihilation and loss of identity, because it realises there is a vacancy at the heart of language's attempts to be meaningful.

Keats and Shelley explore further a lyrical conflict between surface and depth, seeing (or reading) and listening, and printed text and music, when they encounter the distinctly feminine objects of the urn and the Medusa painting. Keats feels compelled to speak to his urn's

"ditties of no tone" and Shelley is drawn to the pictorial representation of Medusa's "melodious hue of beauty" (14, my italic). Keats's urn and Shelley's "On Medusa" question how language can be truly representational, as these visual objects are represented through tropes of silence and the use of deixis. This complicates an already paradoxical relation between reading and listening in their lyrics, making the reader strain to hear both the poet's address to the object and that visual object's silent music, as he or she peers between the words read on the page to discern the object's features.

In this sense readers are eavesdroppers, reminiscent of their voyeuristic role in "Ode to Psyche", on a private dialogue of a consciousness with itself. Fascinated, readers are unable to cover their ears, or tear their gaze away from the terrible beauty which mesmerises them. Shelley's portrayal of Medusa provides a perfect image for the audience's predicament, as her concealed ears amongst her hair of serpents and irresistible, yet terrifying, gaze are a reminder that her siren song[36] and agony can only be voiced through a visually silent "melodious hue of beauty" (my italics). To gaze upon the urn, like staring into Medusa's eyes, is to confront an inner horror of vacancy and self-annihilation, which Keats's poetic manipulation ensures does not immortalise its observers by petrification.

The scepticism Keats and Shelley cast over transcendental explanations of the universe has serious implications for the self which, once again rooted in the world, is set adrift on dark and treacherous waters, speeding towards its final annihilation in death. Such a self is without the security of epistemological, ontological, or moral certainties. For Keats and Shelley, the self and the universe

cannot be constructed through any one single fiction, not even that of transcendentalism, but must be invented and re-invented by numerous competing fictions concerning the self's relation to the universe. These imaginative fictions embrace a life that has no metaphysical truth and an existence with all its joys and pains. This kind of imaginative fiction-making, conscious of its own illusory nature, is not prescriptive of any one single truth, but celebrates the endless possibility of meaning that life may have.[37] Through a multiplicity of fictions and a multivalency of meanings, a self is perpetually re-invented and re-discovered, undergoing Nietzsche's paradoxical task of "how one becomes what one is" (EH, 31). Both Keats and Shelley share Nietzsche's notion of self as process, reflected by the Dionysian artist who "is continually transforming himself" (TI, 84 [10]), and understand that a journey of self-exploration is "[a] dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still" (Z, 43). Self-exploration amongst a series of competing fictions is "dangerous", as any sort of self-recovery requires an encounter with a loss of self, because "that one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea what one is" (EH, 64).

Shelley, in "To a Skylark", embraces this loss of self and what vacancy lies behind these invented fictions with joyful exuberance. The poetic handling of Shelley's skylark, as another absent addressee, is different from his previous treatment of the Spirit's "[u]nseen shadow" or the Power's absence, because it directly confronts the bird's corporeal non-presence from the outset:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!

Bird thou never wert,

That from Heaven, or near it,

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. ("To a Skylark", 1-5)

It is an invisible tumbling down from "Heaven", or somewhere "near it", of the "unpremeditated art" of the skylark's song which gives only a vague impression of its unseen presence. Shelley deliberately denies his skylark a physical presence when he addresses it as "[b]ird thou never wert". The bird's physical presence is surpassed by Shelley's appeal to its incorporeal existence. What is important are the "profuse strains" of song rained down upon the world from the bird's Spirit; they matter more than the skylark's physicality which is consumed in a "cloud of fire" and submerged in the "blue deep" (8-9). The "unbodied joy" (14) of the skylark is heard as "shrill delight" (20), represented through an intermingling of light and sound imagery suggestive of both the skylark's melodious "strains" and invisibility:

Keen as are the arrows

Of that silver sphere,

Whose intense lamp narrows

In the white dawn clear

Until we hardly see--we feel that it is there. (21-5)

Shelley's skylark "showers a rain of melody" (34-5), radiating out song like the "intense lamp" of the morning star upon earthbound

mortals.[36] This stanza is a culmination of a poetic connection between Venus, as morning and evening star, and the skylark, which is previously unperceived "[i]n the golden lightning / Of the sunken sun" (11-12) and "[l]ike a star of Heaven, / In the broad daylight...unseen" (18-19). The transition from sunset to the "pale purple even" (16), leading to the break of a "white dawn clear", charts a joyous yet unsuccessful effort to figure the skylark's voice that fills "[a]ll the earth and air" (26). The skylark elides Shelley's tropes, which strain to capture the bird's essence, as its indiscernible form dissolves before him, exactly as Venus's "silver sphere" is extinguished to the naked eye when dawn breaks. This movement from dusk through to dawn marks a journey to the limits of perception and knowledge, anticipated by the repetition of "[h]igher still and higher" (6) and "singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest" (10), where the listener who desires to image the skylark's "voice" (27) is forced to ask "[w]hat thou art we know not; / What is most like thee?" (31-2).

Shelleyan fiction-making once again confesses its fictive nature, but this time without the vacant horror dramatised in "On Medusa" or the negative tropes that haunt "Mont Blanc". Shelley recognises the skylark as unknowable, beyond our powers of perception or representation, as its "Spirit" is akin to that of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", which can only make itself known to the world through its effects. Such a realisation in "To a Skylark" produces a celebration of imagination's power to invent and reinvent numerous fictions and delight in a multiplicity of images. Shelley's dedication to the skylark's melodious "voice" also celebrates the ingenious struggle of a poet's voice to represent what is unknowable:

Like a Poet hidden,

In the light of thought,

Singing hymns unbidden,

Till the world is wrought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not... (36-40)

A parallel is drawn between Shelley's "unseen" skylark and a poet-figure "hidden" from the public gaze by the obscurity of what he contemplates. Concealed "[i]n the light of thought" a poet weaves and sings "hymns unbidden" until, eventually, his "singing" evokes a "sympathy" from "the world" of "hopes and fears it heeded not". Poet and skylark share a certain similitude in that their voices can have an effect in the world even if their corporeal presence is undetectable. This stanza initiates a series of similes, including a secret romance of a "high-born maiden / In a palace-tower" who makes "music sweet as love" (41-2, 44), a mysterious "glow-worm" which scatters "unbeholden its aereal hue" (46, 47-8) and, finally, a "rose embowered / In its own green leaves" which invisibly "[m]akes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged / thieves" of the wind's gusts (51-2; 54-5).

Each simile depicts an instance where an effect occurs and the cause remains obscured. These sensuous images attempt to approximate what it is like to experience the skylark's music and testify to Shelley's celebration of the elasticity of poetic language even when faced with its limitations. "To a Skylark" gains imaginative impetus from Shelley's pronouncement of "[a]ll that ever was / Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass" (58-60), because it highlights an inadequacy in his images (of solitary poet, love-lorn princess, secretive glow-worm

and scented rose) and leads to a new strategy of questioning the skylark:

> What objects are the fountains
> Of thy happy strain?
> What fields, or waves, or mountains?
> What shapes of sky or plain?
> What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain? (71-5)

Shelley's second acknowledgment of the limitations of poetic language and the skylark's unrepresentability triggers a series of speculative questions about the transcendental world the bird may inhabit. These questions are an innovative way of making language work, when confronted by its own inadequacies, which protects Shelley's poetic voice from being silenced. Both a poet's "hymns unbidden" and the skylark's "rain of melody" risk being devoid of music, existing only as the silent words of a poem on a page. The skylark questions Shelley's competence as a poet by eluding a variety of poetic images, intended to express the bird's melodious "voice" through the poet's own. Shelley's skylark and Keats's Grecian Urn threaten to tease their respective poets out of thought, forcing both poets to resort to a series of questions to avoid lapsing into poetic silence. Shelley's speculations about the realm to which the "unseen" skylark belongs suggests it exists without "pain", or "shadow of annoyance" (78), able to love without knowing "love's sad satiety" (79-80). Set against this immortal and untroubled realm is the human sphere of troubles, pain and anguish:

We look before and after,

And pine for what is not:

Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

(86-90)

Despite Shelley's assertion that the skylark "of death must deem / Things more true and deep / Than we mortals dream" (82-4), he does not favour the skylark's transcendence over human mutability. Shelley recognises that to value the skylark's song, as a sign of a transcendental realm, is a result of a human predilliction to "pine for what is not". What Shelley's "blithe spirit" knows of love, anguish and death is limited, lacking the richness of human experience, where knowledge is acquired through suffering and even the "sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought". Like Keats's encounter with his imaginary urn, Shelley's celebration of the skylark's "clear keen joyance" (76) avoids recommending a transcendental flight from reality, favouring instead, in Nietzsche's view, an all too human world with all of its contingencies and inadequacies. Shelley's enthusiastic celebration of the skylark's unearthly "voice" leads to a poetically innovative and ecstatic acceptance of life:

Teach me half the gladness

That thy brain must know,

Such harmonious madness

From my lips would flow

The world should listen then--as I am listening now. (101-5)

In "To a Skylark" the bird's song is not, ultimately, valuable for its transcendent quality, but rather for the poetic "skill" (99) it emblematises: a skill which, if known to Shelley, would enable him to command attention from the world. Ironically, Shelley's efforts to find a suitable image for the skylark's "voice" compose an excited "harmonious madness" of their own. The challenge of representing the skylark's song has tested and improved Shelley's skills as a poet. In fact, Shelley's poetic outpouring improves upon the skylark's own, because as one of the "sweetest songs...that tell of saddest thoughts", his imaginative fiction-making embraces a human suffering unknown to the bird. "To a Skylark" is an intoxicated version of the tragic and Dionysian understanding of existence, in which an encounter with absence and vacancy is transfigured into a positive creation of what Nietzsche calls an "exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish and blissful...freedom above all things" (GS, 4).

This Dionysian intoxication celebrates vacancy and self-annihilation as a liberation to an endless process of "becoming" and self-invention. Such a Dionysian awareness understands that only art or poetry make life's suffering acceptable, because it is only "[a]s an aesthetic phenomenon [that] existence is still bearable for us" (GS, 107): in this state our desire to be the "poets of our lives" (GS, 299) comes closest to fulfilment.

A desire for self-annihilation, expressed through imagery of intoxication, characterises Keats's opening to "Ode to a Nightingale". Overhearing a nightingale singing "of summer in full-throated ease"

(10), hidden amidst a "melodious plot / Of beechen green, and shadows numberless" (8-9), turns the listener from a contemplation of its "happy lot" (5) to a consideration of human anguish:

> My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
> My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
> Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
> One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk... (1-4)

The listener knows that to be transported to the nightingale's world of "happiness" (6) requires a dissolution of the self and an obliteration of life's pain and suffering. To be united with the nightingale requires a loss of self-consciousness and is comparable to sipping fatal "hemlock", anaesthetising pain with a "dull opiate", or seeking a watery death in the "Lethe". Keats as poet desires to sing--or write poetry--with the effortless and "full-throated ease" of the nightingale.

Recalling Shelley's skylark's ignorance of pain, the nightingale's world symbolises a transcendental plane beyond human anguish which appears, at first, so enticing that Keats considers taking a "draught of vintage" (11) in order that he "might drink, and leave the world unseen" and "fade away into the forest dim" (19-20). Draining "a beaker full of the warm South" (15) would ensure the desired state of forgetfulness and trigger an inspirational flight of imagination, as its contents are likened to "the blushful Hippocrene" (16). Keats's "vintage draught", on one level, is a natural product "[t]asting of Flora and the country green" (13) and, on another, is attributed an aesthetic and mythological

significance as the "Hippocrene" of the Muses. This dual significance is equally applicable to the nightingale, which is both a natural bird of the "beechen green" and an aesthetic "light-winged Dryad of the trees" (7), crucial to the mythology of Philomel.[39] Such an imaginative transformation of nature into an aesthetic object of supernatural, universal and mythological[40] importance underlines an irreconcilable distance between the listener and the nightingale, despite a desire for a forgetful union with its "melodious plot". Even Keats's imagined merging with the nightingale in the "forest dim" turns his thoughts back toward humanity's suffering:

> Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
> What thou among the leaves hast never known,
> The weariness, the fever, and the fret
> Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
> Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies... (21-6)

The impulse to "[f]ade far away, dissolve, and quite forget" into the nightingale's transcendental realm is immediately counterbalanced by an awareness of the human "weariness, the fever, and the fret", which the bird as removed artistic ideal "hast never known". Keats's first imagined flight from reality fails to enact his desire to "leave the world unseen", because "to quite forget" produces a recollection of human mutability, represented by the ghostly synecdoche of "[w]here palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs" and a phantom of "spectre-thin" youth. To "fade away" and "dissolve" consciousness act as

reminders of the self-consciousness Keats sought to avoid, leading to the reflection that "to think is to be full of sorrow / And leaden eyed despairs" (27-8). This reflection points to the ephemerality of "Beauty" and "Love" (29-30), marking an end to Keats's pastoral fiction of escape into an idealised world of "[d]ance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth" (14).

Keats's fiction-making in "Ode to a Nightingale" is not, like Shelley's in "To a Skylark", preoccupied with finding an appropriate figure for the bird's song; rather, it tests imaginative fictions as a means of achieving union with the nightingale. So Keats's rejection of "Bacchus and his pards" (32) produces the urgency of "[a]way! away! for I will fly to thee" and an assertion that imagination alone can secure unity with the nightingale's world. Keats will fly to the nightingale:

> ...on the viewless wings of Poesy,
> Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
> Already with thee! tender is the night,
> And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
> Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
> But here there is no light,
> Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
> Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways. (33-40)

Confronted with the limitations of his pastoral fiction of "the warm South" (15), Keats constructs a romance scene under the reign of a "Queen-Moon" attended to by "all her starry Fays", reminiscent both of the earlier bowers in Endymion and the figure of Cynthia. Keats's

ecstatic claim "[a]lready with thee!" implies he is at one with the nightingale, "pouring forth" song (57) and soaring with the bird "on the viewless wings of Poesy". This imagined harmony is disturbed by an ambivalence about the workings of the mind in this stanza. Keats's reference to "the dull brain [that] perplexes and retards" is double in effect: it recalls, on one hand, an oblivion of self-consciousness previously equated with a "dull opiate" and, on the other hand, it points to the self-conscious mental effort required to create an imaginary romantic bower. Such creative mental effort recalls "the wreath'd trellis of a working brain" in Psyche's bower. Keats's imagined harmony is further troubled by awareness of the difference between the ethereal brilliance of the "Queen-Moon" and "her starry Fays" and our earthbound existence, located firmly in "[b]ut here there is no light / Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown" (my italic).[41] The illusory harmony of the romance mode discloses a darker Dionysian reality of "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways". This disclosure forces Keats to adopt a different kind of imaginary flight which embraces the absence and darkness of these "winding mossy ways":

> I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
> Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
> But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
> Wherewith the seasonable month endows
> The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
> White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
> Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves... (41-7)

Keats supplements his loss of sight in the "embalmed darkness" with the smell of "soft incense" and "each sweet / Wherewith the seasonable month endows". These seasonal scents provide the only foundation for the sensuous descriptions of the spring flora. Keats's use of synaesthesia ensures that, in spite of his claim "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet", the reader strains to smell "what soft incense hangs upon the boughs" or to spy out the "[f]ast fading violets cover'd up in leaves". Keats continues to withdraw from the transcendental (or fake transcendental) "Queen-Moon" into a location where there is no light "from Heaven...with the breezes blown". So Keats's desire to abandon and "leave the world unseen" is counterbalanced by a return to a world that cannot be seen.

Keats recreates the scene as a mental landscape through a negative fiction. Much of what, in Keats's description, is absently present is doubly unseen, like the colourful "violets" hidden in the darkness and "cover'd up in leaves", or "[t]he coming musk rose, full of dewy wine" (49) concealed in the gloom and not yet fully blossomed, to enhance their visual impression. Keats recognises the solipsistic limitations of being absorbed by the imaginative products of his own mind and turns away from his unseen world of "embalmed darkness". To live solely in the world of imagination is to turn away from reality and "leave the world unseen". Consequently, Keats rejects both a transcendental fiction of flight and a solipsistic fiction of withdrawal from the world. For Keats to "[f]ade far away, dissolve, and quite forget" is to remember human suffering and transience at the crucial moment of dissolution. Keats's persistent return to the hardships of existence after each rejection of

a particular mode of fiction leads to a confrontation with the ultimate absence of death:

> Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath;
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain... (51-6)

This deathly absence was already implicit in the doubly negative descriptions of the "embalmed darkness", which give rise to a highly poeticised fiction of death. There is no mention of the physical realities of dying; Keats's imagined annihilation of the self consists of being "half in love with easeful Death" and an exquisite ceasing "upon the midnight with no pain". Keats's weaving of fictions in "many a mused rhyme" has often forced him to confront absence and self-annihilation. Yet "[t]o cease upon the midnight" is not to become one with the nightingale, to which he listens, unable to discern it in the darkness. Keats's desire to write poetry with the same musical ease that the nightingale sings, ultimately, points not to the similarity between poet and bird, writing and music, but to their differences. He listens:

> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy!
> Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain--
> To thy high requiem become a sod. (57-60)

The nightingale's "high requiem" is forever immortalised in the myth of Philomel, famed by subsequent generations for its melodious singing, and preserved as an aesthetic object in Keats's ode. In contrast, if Keats surrenders to an "easeful death", he will "have ears in vain" to hear the nightingale's song and "cease" to aspire to pour forth his own "soul" in poetry. Keats's nightingale would still sing even when the poet is in the grave, no more than an insensitive "sod". This realisation anticipates Keats's proclamation, that "[t]hou was not born for death, immortal Bird!" (61), which asserts the immutability of the nightingale's song and the dependence of this immutability upon those who record history and write literature:

> No hungry generations tread thee down;
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown:
> Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn... (62-7)

Keats's nightingale is portrayed as a steadfast friend to the present "hungry generations", a companion to "emperor and clown" in "ancient days", and a comforter in biblical times to "the sad heart of Ruth". These lines are characterised by a profound sense of loss and longing, emphasised by the starved down-trodden "generations", a regret for the passing of "ancient days" and the "forlorn" (70, 71) figure of Ruth weeping "amid the alien corn". Such a sense of longing recalls Keats's previous image of a dying "spectre-thin" youth and a world

filled with "leaden-eyed / despairs"; it shows Keats's sympathy for a human and mutable world over the immortality of the nightingale's realm.

Keats's fiction-making offers the consolation that "[p]erhaps the self-same song" heard by Ruth was also heard by subsequent generations and so can comfort Keats in the present. Ingeniously, this fiction of consolation relies upon a tentative "[p]erhaps" and a re-writing of the biblical account of Ruth to ensure that her lonely figure becomes an internalised symbol for Keats's mental state.[42] Mythology, history and literature are reappropriated into Keats's fiction-making to ensure that the nightingale's song is seen as a consolation which is limited but richly expressive. Keats's poetic fiction-making seeks to immortalise itself by preserving the immortality of the nightingale's song, but remains constantly aware of its own fictionality and transience. The nightingale's song and Keats's fiction-making permit us to wander in everlasting and imaginary realms without forgetting the darker elements of human reality. Even when the ode unlatches "magic casements" they open "on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn" (69-70), echoing the window ajar at the close of "Ode to Psyche". These "magic casements" allow the reader to gaze upon the imaginary "faery lands" of poetic invention, although the "perilous seas" act as a reminder of the risks involved in an imaginative voyage of self-exploration. These "faery lands forlorn" point, simultaneously, to what is wanting in poetic fictions of transcendence and to the absence, longing, and transience which characterises human existence:

> Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
> To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf. (71-4)

Keats recognises the limitations of these alternative modes of fiction explored in the ode and denounces the "fancy" of poetic fiction-making as a "deceiving elf". The word "[f]orlorn" sounds like a funeral bell, which draws Keats's attention back towards his "sole self", firmly situated in the human world of suffering and death. The nightingale's fading "plaintive anthem" (75) does not mourn Keats's death, imagined or otherwise, because what is "buried deep" (77) and grieved for is the nightingale's "music", along with the "vision" or "waking dream" its song occasioned (80). Keats's "sole self" is altered by these imaginary flights of the imagination as, like those who observe the Grecian Urn, he comes to understand the importance of affirming a life of contingencies over a transcendental realm, or immortal work of art. In spite of a finality to Keats's separation from the nightingale, the ode's closing lines suggest an uncertainty that might trigger further flights of fancy and self-exploration. In this instance, Keats avoids solipsism by expressing his epistemological and ontological doubts as questions:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep? (79-80)

"Ode to a Nightingale" and "To a Skylark" celebrate the creative freedom offered by a Dionysian understanding of reality. Keats and Shelley rejoice in the "harmonious madness" of their innovative fiction-

making and language's elasticity in its struggle to convey what "[n]o voice will tell". Both poets embrace negation, absence and death as an impetus for their fiction-making, as they expose what is wanting in fictions of transcedence. This scepticism means that the self is free to explore and re-invent itself through alternative modes of fiction. These modes are explored in Keats's contemplation of potential methods of self-annihilation and exercised by Shelley's inventions of images to represent the skylark. Keats and Shelley display a "tragic feeling" which, in Nietzsche's words, is characterised by an "overflowing feeling of life and energy within which even pain acts as a stimulus" (TI, 121 [5]):

> Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the sacrifice of its highest types-- that is what I called Dionysian that is...the psychology of the tragic poet. Not so as to get rid of pity and terror, not so as to purify oneself of a dangerous emotion...but...to realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming--that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction...
>
> (TI, 121 [5])

A celebration of the West Wind's "[w]ild spirit" (13), in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", embraces destruction and renewal as essential aspects to a cylical process of becoming. The "unseen presence" of the Wind animates the universe by driving the dead leaves "like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing" (3). The West Wind, as the "breath of Autumn's

being" (1), is only detectable through the effects it has on the world and recalls Shelley's concealed Spirit in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc"'s hidden Power.

Shelley's West Wind is both "[d]estroyer and preserver" (14), responsible for the onset of autumn, with winter close behind, and for the renewal of life in spring. Traces of the same West Wind, "[w]ho chariotest to their dark wintry bed / The winged seeds" (6-7), are found in the "azure sister of the Spring" who drives "sweet buds like flocks to feed in air" (11).[43] The deathly shades of autumnal leaves, which appear as "[p]estilence-stricken multitudes" (5) are carefully balanced against the "living hues and odours" of spring's renewal (12). The seasonal patterns of autumn and spring, death and life, mirror each other perfectly to ensure that the reader sees them as inseparable and the West Wind as "[d]estroyer and preserver".[44] Shelley's poetic assertion of a cyclical process of death and re-birth in nature, represented by the "winged seeds", attempts to console humanity's awareness that "a corpse within its grave" (8) has no escape. Consequently, Shelley's ode moves beyond this kind of fiction-making to confront human suffering and death in his image of "rain and lightning" (18) as a dedicated devotee of Dionysus:

> Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
> Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
> Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
> The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: Oh, hear! (20-8)

This is a truer representation of the West Wind's "uncontrollable", unfettered, and inexpressible destructive power. Shelley directly confronts the necessity of change and death, as he shifts from being a passive observer of cyclical nature to an active participant who, like the "fierce Maenad", rejoices in the Wind's destructive powers. There is no attempt to offer any consolation for this destruction, as the West Wind's "congregated might" threatens to break the "blue surface" of "Heaven and Ocean" (19, 17) with its "[b]lack rain, and fire, and hail" and seal all living things in "a vast sepulchre". Only the indifferent "dirge" of thunder marks the passing of those who are "[v]aulted" in by the darkness of the "approaching storm" and the "closing night".

A far less animated and hectic Dionysian acceptance of death is presented in Keats's "To Autumn". Keats acknowledges death as a necessary fulfilment of process and so his poem's final stanza signifies the end of day, the season of autumn, and the passing away of a year:

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn... (25-30)

"To Autumn"'s movement can be characterised by the "light wind [which] lives or dies", as the poem oscillates between the oppositional states of spring and autumn, day and night, action and inaction (16-20), freedom and enclosure (32-3)[45], and life and death. The end of this "soft-dying day" is inextricable from the "barred clouds [that] bloom"; the sheep are described as "full-grown lambs" to emphasise their affinity with the life of spring and the inevitable death of autumn. Keats understands that the "treble soft" of the "red-breast" (32), heralding winter, is the natural fruition of autumnal processes and a vital prelude to the renewed "songs of spring" (23). Keats's whistling "red-breast" ensures a controlled fading away of autumn's music, which softly silences the gnats' "wailful choir" (27), the sheep's "loud bleat from hilly bourn" (30), and the singing "[h]edge-crickets" (31).[46] "To Autumn"'s mournful music underlines Keats's unflinching "[a]ffirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems" through a joyful acceptance of destruction and death.[47]

This final stanza's preoccupation with death is anticipated by Keats's imaginative re-invention of the mythical figure of death in the previous one. Autumn's personification transforms the conventional imagery of death as a reaper into a female figure[48], who is drugged by the overwhelming scent of the poppies and whose scythe is an impotent "hook" (17). She gives herself over to sleep rather than reaping corn, or human lives. Keats's mythical figure of death is not actively antagonistic to humanity; instead, she watches with her "patient look"

the "last oozings hours by hours" (21-2) of the fermenting cider and the final drops of human existence. In "To Autumn" Keats maintains a careful balance between transience and eternity by not describing anything as reaching its final end: autumn's conspiracy is able "to set budding more, And still more" (3, 8-9), the cider is still in its "last oozings", and the "soft-dying" day is never extinguished. So Keats's poetic fiction affirms human transience against the eternal cycle of the seasons and an eternity of human suffering and death as a necessary part of nature's transience. Keats's "To Autumn" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" in their own individual ways affirm Nietzsche's "joy in destruction", which is expressed in a more parodic and playful manner:

> All joy wants the eternity of all things, wants honey, wants dregs, wants intoxicated midnight, wants graves, wants the consolation of graveside tears, wants gilded sunsets...
>
> (Z, 332)

Keats's fiction-making presents death in the female figure of autumn, as an integral part of a necessary process, through his poetic rewriting of established mythology. Alternatively, Shelley creates a cyclical mythology of consolation in order to expose its fictionality through a confrontation with the figure of a frenzied Maenad.

This Dionysian fiction of the "fierce Maenad" achieves an apparent unity between Shelley and the West Wind, but the poet does not have the Wind's power to command "the steep sky's commotion" (15) and so is one of the many living things which will be consumed by its destructive forces. Shelley desires poetic mastery over the Wind and struggles to

contain its "[w]ild spirit" only to find himself in danger of being contained by the storm's "vast sepulchre". The turmoil of the "zenith's height" stretches Shelley's poetic language to the point that it threatens to "burst" the ode's fiction-making and the darkening night sky. Shelley recognises the inadequacy of his consolatory cyclical myth of the seasons and the linguistic shortfallings of his Dionysian fiction-making. Both these attempts at fiction-making lead to a realisation of the all-pervading presence of the Wind and the difficulties of containing its power in language.

Shelley's aspiration to be at one with the West Wind forces him to test out alternative modes of fiction, moving from the failed consolation of the seasonal cycles on land, to the tumult of the sky and, then, to the depths of the sea. The Mediterranean's "summer dreams" (29), the "sapless foliage of the ocean" (40), and the stormy "chasms" of the "Atlantic's level powers" (38, 37) suggest the sea's mirroring of the seasonal cycles on land. This cyclical movement is echoed in the previous stanza, where "[l]oose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed" (16), so that they can provide new life in the form of the "approaching storm". These alternative fictions modify the original myth of consolation in the cycle of the seasons by extending and repeating their movement in the sky and sea.[43] The sky mirrors the change of the seasons on land with its gathering storm and the sea reflects both what occurs on the land "within the waves intenser day" (34) and in the sky. In the water cycle the sea and sky are intermingled with one another, as the "decaying leaves" of the brewing storm clouds are "[s]hook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean".

Shelley's emphasis on the water cycle over his earlier humanised account of seasonal change incorporates the ode's pattern of life and death--creation and destruction--into a crucial natural process which is indifferent to human affairs. This repetition of circular movement underlines the extent of the West Wind's influence over earth, sky and sea, supporting the description of its "[w]ild spirit...moving everywhere" (13). Each of these attempts to represent and contain the Wind's effects upon land, sky and sea close with a plea of "oh, hear!", which occur just after a recognition of its omnipresence and power (14-15, 27-8, 41-2). Shelley's pleas to the West Wind mark the inability of his poetic language to capture its essential spirit and are also an assertion of poetic faith that the Wind can be controlled by language in the future, as each unsuccessful representation is turned into an invocation of its presence. The West Wind's resistance to language underlines nature's separateness from and indifference to a humanity troubled by mortality. The sceptical and Dionysian Shelley knows all too well the impossibility of a transcendental communion with nature:

> If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
>
> If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
>
> A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
>
> The impulse of thy strength, only less free
>
> Than thou, O uncontrollable! (43-7)

Confronted with nature's resistance and antipathy, Shelley endeavours to re-invent himself imaginatively as part of the natural

world, so that he can fully participate in the Wind's power. Shelley's desire to be driven by the Wind like a "dead leaf", "swift cloud", or "wave" recalls his other unsuccessful attempts to capture its effects in language through the images of land, sky and sea. What makes this attempt even less hopeful is Shelley's tentative repetition of "[i]f I were". Shelley is forced to acknowledge again the divide between the natural and the human, between the Wind's spirit and his own. More significantly, Shelley realises that to be one with the West Wind is to be enslaved to the "uncontrollable" force which he sought to contain and master. Faced with nature's indifference to humanity's plight and the limitations of poetic language, Shelley must either lapse into silence and despair, or assert his ability to invent fictions by means of language's elastic capacity:

> I would ne'er have striven
>
> As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
>
> Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
>
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! (51-4)

In a moment of almost utter despair Shelley confronts the futility and necessity of vying with nature through the invention of competing fictions, such fictions make it possible to confront all that is painful in life, yet they remain aware of their fragile status. The fragility of these fictive modes is reflected in Shelley's plea of "[o]h, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!", which weakly repeats the fictions of analogy with nature that he has exhausted earlier in the ode. Even when Shelley's imaginative fiction-making verges on collapse, it reasserts a

hoped-for connection between the human and natural, mortal and immortal, transcendental and real, through the salvific claim that "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed". Momentarily, Shelley is both sacrificed god and broken prophet. Shelley's inability to tame the Wind's "[w]ild spirit", or humanise an indifferent universe ultimately gives rise to a renewed poetic faith and a claim that the Wind's spirit is kindred to his own. The only difference between these two spirits is that the poet's has been tethered by mutability:

> A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
> One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud. (55-6)

Shelley's unsuccessful efforts to contain the Wind's spirit in his fiction-making leads to a realisation of the containment of his own spirit by time and transience. This realisation brings with it an awareness that after the poet's physical death his spirit will survive, for future generations, in the words he leaves behind. Like the West Wind which makes its presence felt by causing effects in the world, the ode's poetic language can create and destroy meaning long after its author has passed from the world.[50] Shelley reconciles himself with his own mortality and defers the responsibility for circulating the meaning, or spirit, of his words to the power of the Wind:

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth

Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! (63-8)

The ode's assertion of a similarity between poet and West Wind enables them to act as instruments of one another. The Wind will drive Shelley's "dead thoughts over the universe" like autumn's "withered leaves" with the hope that they will "quicken a new birth" of meaning. Shelley's words can regenerate if their "[a]shes and sparks" are fanned and scattered "among mankind" by the West Wind. Shelley calls upon the Wind to act as his messenger with the "incantation of this verse" and his request that "[b]e thou, Spirit fierce / My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!" (61-2). These instructions reverse an earlier image of the Wind as an "enchanter" from which the leaves fled, by suggesting that Shelley is now a magician, who utters incantations to bend the Wind to his poetic will.[51] Clearly, Shelley does not become a passive "lyre" to the West Wind's "mighty harmonies" (57, 59), but the agent through which the Wind could be a "trumpet of a prophecy" to the "unawakened earth" (69, 68). Shelley's final mode of fiction-making absorbs the tempestuous autumn scene into a mental landscape, where his thoughts are "withered leaves" like those "falling" in the forest (57-8) and the West Wind is an inspirational spirit, which must be shaped into words through a poet's "lips" (68).

In "Ode to the West Wind" Shelley forcibly struggles to come to terms with the universe's indifference to humanity and to harness the natural phenomena of the West Wind to his human purposes. What is dramatised in the ode is the conflict between Shelley's desire to commune with the Wind and nature's resistance to the linguistic

constraints this poetic communion would impose. Shelley is an active participant in the ode's conflict; his presence is either felt as a solitary poet-figure crying out to the Wind, or as, in the final stanza, a prophet who interprets the divine spirit of inspiration for present and future generations.

"To Autumn" elides these difficulties by presenting an implied observing self and so avoids a conflict between an explicit observing consciousness and a universe indifferent to humanity. Keats intricately entwines the human and natural with his portrayal of the implicit cottage which--like the observing self--is scarcely glimpsed amongst "the moss'd cottage-trees" with its "thatch-eves" (5-6). There is no distinction between observer and observed. This is emphasised by the presence of the bees who "<u>think</u> warm days will never cease" (<u>my italic</u>, 10), representing a further union between questioning human consciousness and instinctive feeling. The bees' belief that "days will never cease" underlines "To Autumn"'s overall concern with the fruition of process and its silent refusal to delineate different modes of time.

Keats's implied observing consciousness is only brought once to the foreground of "To Autumn". In a moment of doubt over his imaginative powers, Keats's tests the strength of his fiction-making with the regretful question, "[w]here are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?" (23). Posing this question does not unravel "To Autumn"'s fiction of acceptance, because it is countered immediately by Keats's affirmation of his poetic faith in the powers of imagination with his dismissive "[t]hink not of them, thou hast thy music too" (24). The introduction of "songs of spring" into the final stanza does not lead to remorse for the absence of spring's vibrance, but allows a celebration

of autumn's sombre music that carries "To Autumn" to its triumphant conclusion of the "gathering swallows twitter in the skies" (33). Like the closing stanza of "Ode to the West Wind", Keats both affirms and celebrates the "sadness" of autumn's "mighty harmonies" with its "deep, autumnal tone" ("Ode to the West Wind", 59-61). "To Autumn" and "Ode to the West Wind" endeavour to fuse the music of autumn with the act of writing. Keats deliberately forgets the distinction between writing poetry and the processes of the season by never mentioning the falling leaves in his description, so that the ode becomes one of autumn's "leaves" on the printed page. Equally, Shelley combines poetic writing and vocality in order that the "leaves"--or pages--of his ode can be scattered by the West Wind and sounded as a "trumpet of a prophecy".[52]

Shelley's ode ends with an internalised fiction of a hoped for artistic and social renewal, which is asserted in the final line: "O, Wind / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (69-70). Shelley's fiction-making ensures a bias towards the positive affirmation of spring's assured regeneration. Yet this question is a test of poetic faith, as spring's return will be all too closely followed by autumn, which will herald another deathly winter. Keats and Shelley have come to understand that to desire the "eternity of all things" is to also desire endless pain, loss and death.

Both poets confront the pain of human existence by inventing Dionysian fictions that avoid lapsing into silence by overcoming moments of imaginative doubt. These potential moments of creative despair were seized upon as opportunities to demonstrate imagination's versatility and the elasticity of poetic expression. Poetic language resists any lyrical impulse to translate it into the medium of music because,

ultimately, language signifies in ways that complicate the assumed relation between sound and sense, as well as sensuous experience.[53] It is often this dissonant note of language which unsettles lyric poetry's bid for harmonic unity. Such disharmony unsettles the calm waters of lyrical unity to expose the troubled waters charted by Keats and Shelley. Steering this course involve Keats and Shelley maintaining a delicate balance between competing fictions of unity and disunity, absence and presence, silence and sound, and scepticism and transcendentalism. Through an exertion of their imaginative powers, Keats and Shelley transformed moments of poetic desperation into a celebration and triumph of creative ingenuity and invention.

Notes

[1] JKP, 1, 323.

[2] SPW, 72, 529-31.

[3] GS, 255-6.

[4] M.H. Abrams offers a useful account of the lyric's rise to critical credibility. See Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. 1953. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), 84-8. Stuart Curran offers a more recent account of the lyric as one of British Romanticism's protean literary forms, or genre mixta. See Curran, Poetic Form and British Romanticism (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986), 180-2.

[5] Michael O'Neill, "'The Bounds of Air Are Shaken:'" The Shelleyan Visionary Lyric," Shelley 1792-1992, ed. James Hogg. Salzburg Studies in English Literature. (New York: Mellen, 1993), 1.

[6] Paul H. Fry, The Poet's Calling in the English Ode (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980), 190, hereafter referred to as PC.

[7] Tilottama Rajan, "Romanticism and the Death of Lyric Consciousness," Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism, ed. Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985), 196-7.

[8] KSD, 229.

[9] Michael O'Neill, "'All Things Seem Only One': The Shelleyan Lyric,'" Percy Bysshe Shelley: Bicentenary Readings, ed. Kelvin Everest. Essays and Studies 45 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 128.

[10] PL, 85.

[11] Daniel P. Watkins offers a contrasting account of the odes which takes issue with Rajan's interpretation. See KPI, 105-6; 104-20.

[12] Rajan's expression the "mask of idealism" recalls Paul de Man's emphasis on the tropes and figures of language, particularly his notion of de-facement. Her allusion to "blindness and insight" underlines the de Man-Nietzsche connection. See de Man's "Literary History and Literary Modernity," Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1983), 142-65. See also de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," in RR, 66-81.

[13] Cynthia Chase offers a detailed and useful account of this essay and others by de Man. See Chase, "Giving a Face To a Name: De Man's Figures," Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), 82-112; 107, hereafter referred to as DF.

[14] The phrase is borrowed from Leon Waldoff. See KSI, 114

[15] Bennett makes a similar point about "Ode to Psyche"'s opening lines. See KNA, 130-1.

[16] Waldoff points out Keats's echo of Milton's line: "with forc'd fingers rude...Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear" (6, 108). See KSI, 106. All subsequent quotations from Milton's poetry taken from Douglas Bush, ed. The Portable Milton. 1955. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), hereafter referred to as PM.

[17] Waldoff offers an account of Keats's use of questions in "Ode to Psyche" and other odes to bridge the gap between fantasy and reality, or what I see as a difference between a perceived phenomenon and an introspective epiphenomenon. See KSI, 109.

[18] Harold Bloom points out the Miltonic and Wordsworthian echoes in this stanza. He also offers a more positive account of Keats's "communion" with Psyche, arguing that the "poet is born in his own mind

as he moves to become a priest of Psyche". See Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 392-3. See MM, 155. See also KSI, 115.

[19] Daniel P. Watkins, "History, Self and Gender in 'Ode to Psyche'," KH, 99.

[20] PC 223-5; 227.

[21] "Fiction" is taken here, after Fry, to be "fictive, constitutive of a reality that may or may not exist, in fact or in potentia, apart from what fiction says of it..." See Paul H. Fry, A Defense of Poetry: Reflections on the Occasion of Writing (California: Stanford UP, 1995), 43. Such "fictions" are also aware of their own fictive nature, as O'Neill suggests, they "...assert in various ways an awareness of their fictional status, swinging between the seeming confession that they are 'only' fictions...and the claim that their kind of feigning offers a more valuable experience than...realistic alternatives." See HMI, 126. I use the term "fiction-making" to denote the necessary invention of "fictions" to interpret the self and our experiences of the world.

[22] Phrase taken from the subtitle of EH.

[23] Andrew J. Welburn, Power and Self-Consciousness in the Poetry of Shelley. Macmillan Studies in Romanticism Ser. (London: Macmillan, 1986), 146, hereafter referred to as PS.

[24] PL, 90.

[25] Rajan points out that the Spirit "[t]hroughout the poem...is a presence that can be conceived only as absence and shadow, a being that is accessible only as nothingness." See DI, 85. The emphasis I place upon Shelley's evocation of a present absence in my reading of The Examiner version of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", first published 9

January, 1817, is applicable to the poem's original draft. The Scrope Davies version of the "Hymn" evokes the Spirit as "[t]he lovely shadow of some awful Power / Walks though unseen among us" (1-2) and is also sceptical about the transcendental realm, because "[n]o voice from some sublimer world hath ever...given" (25-6). Variations in the first version's opening to "Mont Blanc" underline Shelley's representation of a presence-absence in images of light and dark. The Scrope Davies manuscript reads "[i]n day the eternal universe of things" which are juxtaposed against the "now reflecting gloom" and the "source of human thought" arising in unseen "secret caves" rather than the "springs" of the poem's second version (1-6). See The Poems of Shelley (1804-1817), ed. Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest. Longman Annotated English Poets Ser. vol. 1. (London: Longman, 1989), 525-8; 529-41.

[26] PL, 88.

[27] KSR, 5.

[28] In this late work Nietzsche alters the Dionysian category to incorporate the Apollonian principle of order. This manoeuvre enables Nietzsche to use art as a model for life and the artist as a template for his understanding of the subject. Such a view expands, rather than contradicts, his previous notion of the Dionysian in The Birth of Tragedy. Nietzsche's mature view of Dionysian affirmation is particularly apt for describing the chaotic and conflicting elements, which Shelley and Keats force to co-exist in the apparent order of their lyric poetry. See Michael Bell, "The Metaphysics of Modernism: Aesthetic Myth and the Myth of the Aesthetic," Art and Sciences, University of Durham Lecture Series, Durham 1 May 1997. See NPA, 134-9. See also N, 153.

[29] Bloom argues that Shelley is struggling against Wordsworth to establish himself amongst the literary pantheon and his "Hymn" does not deviate from the Wordsworthian model. See MM, 149. A more recent account of Wordsworth's influence on Shelley's "Hymn" and "Mont Blanc" is offered by G. Kim Blank. See Blank, Wordsworth's Influence on Shelley: A Study of Poetic Authority. Macmillan Studies in Romanticism Ser. (London: Macmillan, 1988), 197-8.

[30] PL, 84-5.

[31] Bennett argues that music in the "Grecian Urn Ode" is "both an expression of and a substitute for or deferral of love-making". See KNA, 137.

[32] Grant F. Scott points out that "[t]he stanza dwells on the altar and the town, both objects to be found nowhere on the urn's surface". I also agree with Rajan that there is a tension between the urn's imagined surface and its function as a container of ashes. Rajan cites Ian Jack and Bernard Blackstone as also having identified the Grecian Urn as a funeral urn. See Scott, The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis and the Visual Arts (Hanover, New England : New England UP, 1994), 138; 137, hereafter referred to as SW. See DI, 133. See Bernard Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn: An Interpretation of Keats in Terms of Growth and Form (London: Longman, 1959), 332. See also Ian Jack, Keats and the Mirror of Art (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 217.

[33] Scott points out this contrast. See SW, 132.

[34] I am indebted to William Hildebrand's account of the demonic in Shelley's "On Medusa", which he reads as an inversion of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty". Keats's gothic fiction of the crossed out first stanza of "Ode on Melancholy" alludes to the grim horror of "[y]our

cordage large uprootings from the skull / Of bald Medusa" (JKP, 374). See William Hildebrand, "Self, Beauty and Horror: Shelley's Medusa Moment," The New Shelley: Later Twentieth-Century Views, ed. G. Kim Blank (Macmillan: London, 1991), 159; 150-65, hereafter referred to as NWS. See also SW, 132.

[35] Dickstein makes this point when discussing Keats's "Grecian Urn" and "Nightingale". See KSD, 196.

[36] John Freccero points out that in "ancient mythology" the Medusa "was also said to be a kind of siren". See Freccero, "Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit," Dante: The Poetics of Conversion (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986), 127. See also Jerome J. McGann, "The Beauty of the Medusa: A Study in Romantic Literary Iconology," SiR 11 (1972): 3-25.

[37] Tetreault makes a similar point and draws a parallel between Shelley's thought and the writings of Nietzsche and Derrida. See Ronald Tetreault, "Shelley: Style and Substance," NWS 15-33; 29-33.

[38] PS, 140-1.

[39] Dickstein draws a distinction between the nightingale as art and an aspect of nature. See KSD, 206.

[40] Waldoff makes a similar distinction between natural and "mythological or supernatural figure" in Keats's imagined bowers. See KSI, n. 16, 124.

[41] I agree with Charles J. Rzepka, whose discussion of the ambiguity of "unseen" in the "Nightingale Ode" equates "here there is no light" with the human world. Waldoff offers a contrasting account, reading stanza 5 as a continuation of the nightingale's bower. See Charles J. Rzepka, The Self as Mind: Vision and Identity in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986), 175. See also KSI, 125.

[42] Bennett offers a politicised motive for Keats's rewriting of the Ruth episode. See Andrew J. Bennett, "The Politics of Gleaning in Keats's 'Ode To a Nightingale' and 'To Autumn,'" Keats-Shelley Journal 10 (1990), 34-8. See also KSI, 130-1.

[43] Tetreault makes this point. See PL, 214.

[44] Welburn argues that it is at this point in the "Ode" that "[t]he necessity of death and change is...honestly acknowledged and affirmed". See PS, 162-3.

[45] Bennett's reading of "To Autumn" emphasises the final image of the "unbounded skies" as a "political gesture of defiance against the reappropriation of public property in the contemporary enclosure movement". I disagree with his reading, because it overlooks the delicate oscillation of opposite states present in "To Autumn". See KNA, 165.

[46] Helen Vendler suggests that Keats's handling of autumn's music shows that a poem is "nothing, but a thin thread of sound, rising and falling in obedience to its governing rhythms". See OJK, 261-2. See also Vendler, The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), 124-6.

[47] Waldoff acknowledges Keats's concern with death in "To Autumn"'s final stanza, but overlooks any suggestion of death in the figure of autumn in the previous stanza. See KSI, 158-60.

[48] Mark Bracher offers a detailed account of Keats's modification of the archetype of the deathly reaper in his personification of autumn. See Bracher, "Ideology and Audience Response to Death in Keats's 'To Autumn,'" SiR 29 (1990), 633-55.

[49] PL, 214.

[50] Tetreault makes a similar point. See PL, 217-18. See also SP, 6-7.

[51] See PL, 217. Timothy Webb offers a detailed account of the religious implications of Shelley's closing lines. See also Webb, Shelley: A Voice Not Understood (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977), 179-80.

[52] Fry offers a more detailed account of "To Autumn" and "Ode to the West Wind" in terms of the odes as "leaves" and their fusion of sound and writing. See PC, 208-9; 259.

[53] Christopher Norris makes this point. See DIT, 40.

Chapter 5

"When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be": Shelley's Re-invention of Myth, History, and Identity in **Adonais**.

> ...[T]hen on the shore of the wide world I stand alone...[1]
>
> (John Keats)

> Death, the immortalising winter...[2]
>
> (P.B. Shelley)

> I shall show you the consummating death, which shall be a spur and a promise to the living.[3]
>
> (Friedrich Nietzsche)

In Adonais Shelley returns to the romance world of his earlier poetic career. Shelley's decision to write an elegy on the death of John Keats using Spenserian stanzas, overflowing with literary allusions to Milton's Lycidas and Sidney's "Astrophel" and "November Eclogue", and his choice of Bion's lament for Moschus as epigraph, mark a self-conscious return to the pastoral and classical tradition. This return is often characterised as sceptical by those commentators who, following in the wake of Wasserman's detailed account of Adonais, argue that Shelley's elegy rejects life and aligns itself with the bleak outlook of Alastor's visionary (SCR, 462).

Lloyd Abbey rejects Wasserman's transcendental emphasis on death as an "access to eternity", suggesting instead that "[t]his skepticism calls into question the thematic validity of all the preceding poems, excepting perhaps the totally skeptical Alastor".[4] Ross Woodman also finds parallels between Adonais and Alastor, although his reading of the "moral dimension of the elegy" as a "metaphysical defence of suicide" is more extreme than Abbey's account.[5]

Adonais, Stuart Curran has observed with "Ode to the West Wind" in mind, is the only place that Shelley alludes to a work of his own canon in any of his poetry.[6] These echoes of his own literary compositions underline the elaborate rhetoric and inter-textuality of Shelley's elegy. The complexity of Adonais's poetic fabric has led to critical agreement between James A.W. Heffernan, Angela Leighton, Peter Sacks and William A. Ulmer over Shelley's self-conscious exploitation of literary tradition and rhetorical figures.[7] Such diverse readings of Adonais rely upon identifying a process of substitution at work in its poetry: Heffernan argues that biography and history are exchanged for Shelley's "version" of the circumstances surrounding Keats's death (RCR, 173), Leighton understands Shelley's act of writing as a deferral of mourning, so that Adonais replaces the "real nature of grief" (SS, 126) with a "'leisure' for grief" (SS, 129), Sacks offers a psychological account of how Shelley's imagery substitutes Adonais for Keats, and Ulmer views Shelley's elegy as reconstituting "relations of figure and truth, absence and presence, poetry and history as structurally supplementary" (ADP, 447). Shelley's substitution of mythical Adonis for an invented Adonais, Urania for Venus, Keats's poetic character for his own, and death for life is precisely mirrored in these interpretations. Emphasis on the elegy's suspension of

mourning, its substitution of Keats's death for a "prospective death of poetry" (ADP, 438) and mythologised vision for historical circumstance, has caused criticism to re-enact Adonais's aesthetic process of supplementation and deferral. Any reading, as Curran notes, "so committed to [Adonais's] aesthetic principles verges on the critical reductionism that sees all literature as being about the making of itself" (SRE, 166). Curran reminds critics that Adonais's meditation on the murder of a poet by a literary review lends itself all too readily to a reading which foregrounds the elegy's creative and literary processes. Nonetheless, a wide variety of critical interpretations have testified to Adonais's processes of rhetoric, supplementation and literary ingenuity. Although Curran is right to warn against such "critical reductionism", he does not answer the question why critics have persisted in reading Shelley's elegy as a revelation of its own imaginative and psychological processes.[8] Such critical persistence shows how integral disclosure about the creative process is to Adonais's poetic fabric.

Adonais reveals the poet's desire to ensure his own future apotheosis and his struggle to represent the silence of death. To chart these difficult, unknown waters, Shelley invents his own mythology to ensure an emotional and creative distance from the specific historical moment of Keats's death. Adonais gains this distance through a process of forgetting biographical detail and historical circumstance[9], a process which itself is paradoxically predicated on commemorating the actual event of Keats's death. A critical emphasis on forgetting in Adonais shares certain assumptions with Heffernan's reading of the poem: Heffernan offers an excellent account of what Shelley knew, or did not know, about Keats's death when composing Adonais. Unfortunately, Heffernan's argument places

too much emphasis on Shelley's desire to avenge himself against Southey which, by implication, might suggest there was some malicious intention behind Shelley's portrayal, in Adonais's early stages, of Keats as weaker than he actually was.[10] Indeed, Shelley's portrait of Keats is part of a rhetorical strategy which ensures that they both have access to the literary pantheon. Shelley's difficulty is that he must assert his own poetic identity against established literary forefathers as well as against Keats, who is about to become one of them. Shelley's elegy plays out Nietzsche's mystery of "a moment, now here and then gone, nothing before it came, again nothing after it has gone, nonetheless returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment" (UM, 61). Aware that to forget is, ultimately, to remember what has been repressed, Adonais understands the impossibility of evading history and time.

Shelley's confrontation with death is born out of a tragic awareness earlier cultivated in Alastor and out of a scepticism developed in his lyrical poetry. Shelley specifies only Endymion and "Hyperion" from the Keatsian canon in his subtitle to Adonais, combining Keats's earlier tragic romance with his mature, darker Titanic epic.[11] Shelley self-consciously adopts an outmoded pastoral tradition to reanimate Keats's poetic identity. This revival of genre and identity is dependent upon Shelley's revision of them both. Shelley reappropriates Keats's identity into his poetic revision of classical mythology at the start of his elegy:

I weep for Adonais--he is dead!

O, weep for Adonais! though our tears

Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!

And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years

To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!" (1-9)

Keats is immediately aligned with the fair youth of Greek mythology who meets an untimely demise (Adonis), the Hebraic God of the Old Testament (Adonai) and the sacrificial, though salvific figure of Christ.[12] Shelley's fictional re-invention of Keats as Adonais, at this stage, combines a pagan world with a Christian one and links the individual death of a particular "sad Hour" to the universal significance of "[a]n echo and a light unto eternity".[13] The "sad Hour" is not simply the occasion for Adonais's death but, aided by the "obscure compeers", the historical chronicler of that tragic moment. Shelley's "sad Hour, selected from all years" is only an instance of time, although inextricable from the history and "eternity" it helps to record, just as Keats's mortal demise is immortalised in the fictional figure of Adonais. Historical recognition is crucial to the survival of a deceased poet's reputation. Adonais's "fate and fame" can only be assured if the temporal dynamic of the "Past", the present "sad Hour", and the "Future" continues to perpetuate itself and his name.

Invocation of the "sad Hour" appears to create an impression of activity and assert a faith in this historical process when, in fact, Shelley's words as elegist cause no effect and recognise their own futility.[14] Shelley's rewriting of the historical event of Keats's death into mythology suggests his own reservations about history securing a dead poet immortality. Yet Shelley's concept of eternity is dependent upon its

opposition to, or overcoming of, a temporal and historical dynamic. The speaker's prosaic, and seemingly incontrovertible, claim that "I weep for Adonais--he is dead!" is set against a plea for others to mourn, even "though our tears / Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!". Mourning will not revive the perished youth. Incapable of grieving, Adonais defers Shelley's own mourning by projecting his grief into the personification of the attending "sad Hour" and its "obscure compeers", who will "mourn our loss" and speak for him the words "'[w]ith me / Died Adonais'".[15] The immediacy for others to mourn is counterbalanced by Shelley's distant withdrawal from the process of mourning. Shelley as Adonais's elegist is aware of how pointless it is to mourn and yet from this sceptical position, confronted by the final silence of death, he must test language's elasticity to secure Adonais's place "among the sons of light" (36). Shelley's silent call for weeping is answered only by a series of self-generated rhetorical questions to ensure narrative momentum:

> Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
> When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
> In darkness? where was lorn Urania
> When Adonais died? (10-13)

Shelley revises the myth of Adonis, mortally wounded by a boar, to portray Adonais's death as a slaughter of an innocent youth, who is incapable of surviving an injury from a single "shaft which flies / In darkness". This cowardly "shaft" is synonymous with the Quarterly Review's "savage criticism" of Endymion which, according to Shelley's description, is a carelessly aimed "poisoned shaft [that] lights on a heart made callous

by many blows or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff" (Preface, 431). Even before Adonais has begun, Shelley displaces the precise biographical circumstances of Keats's death with a scenario in which his deceased contemporary's "susceptible mind" becomes so agitated over a harsh review that he ruptures "a blood vessel" (Preface, 431).[15] Keats, like Adonais his mythopoeic counterpart, is unable to survive being struck by a single "poisoned shaft".

"[T]he closing scene of poor Keats's life" (Preface, 431) is twice removed from the reader by Shelley's mythologising of his own fictional version of events which, Shelley admits, "were not made known to me until the Elegy was ready for the press" (Preface, 431). Keats's actual death is actively forgotten in Shelley's memorial act of writing Adonais. In turn, Shelley's composition of an elegy defers his grief and his mythological figure of the "sad Hour" swerves away from those historical forces which determine "fate and fame". Shelley erases actual events surrounding Keats's illness and death to swerve away from history and time, so he can secure Keats's name through the figure of Adonais, along with his own, as "[a]n echo and a light unto eternity". What is at stake in Adonais's "fate and fame" are the destinies of the poetic identities of Keats and Shelley. Keats's poetic identity must be absorbed into Shelleyan poetic language if Shelley's fiction-making is to revive his "mute voice" (27).

Remoulding Keats's poetic character requires an emptying out of its original contents, so that it can be revitalised and absorbed into a poetics that favours Shelleyan identity and imagery. Such a poetic strategy means that Keats's identity must be remoulded through imagination's "plastic stress" (381) into "more penetrable stuff" than Shelley's own. Shelley's poetic character is superficially superior, outliving the

identities of Keats and Adonais, by virtue of this imaginative "plastic stress", because its flexibility is more suited to a world of harsh realities and criticism. This superiority is only made possible by a re-writing of mythology and an obscuring of biography, which is dependent upon a forgetting of the past. By implication, Keats displays inferiority through being unable to forget the Quarterly Review's "savage criticism", which caused him to perish. Adonais's appeal to time is viewed as hopeless by the elegiac speaker who, as Nietzsche writes, understands that "the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present" (UM, 62). Shelley does not think Keats was an inferior poet but knows that, if he is to rescue Keats successfully from the oblivion of death, his own poetic words must, at least rhetorically, appear stronger and his imaginative powers greater than those of the poet he mourns. Adonais's absorption of Keatsian imagery is only feasible if Shelley is seen to possess the poetic high ground even when, in reality, he is straining under the weight of a literary heritage to which Keats will, shortly, be admitted. Consequently, Shelley sees Keats as unable to accommodate an unaccommodating world, because he cannot exercise imaginative "plastic stress", or what Nietzsche terms a "plastic power", as well as Shelley can:

> I mean by the plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way [eigenertig], to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds. There are people who possess so little of this power that they can perish from a single experience, from a single painful event. (UM, 62)

In the elegy's early movement, Keats and Adonais are fashioned by Shelley's fiction-making into those who are made of "more penetrable stuff" and so "perish from a single experience". Shelley ensures that he and Keats are portrayed as possessing, to varying degrees, similar imaginative powers. Such inherent weakness in Keats's poetic identity is suggested by an early description of his "genius" as both "delicate and fragile" and a "young flower [which] was blighted in the bud" by the "cankerworms" of harsh reviews (Preface, 431). Shelley reinforces this association between Keats's imaginative powers and the image of a fragile, pale and impotent flower in his description of Adonais's fate:

> But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished--
> The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
> Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
> And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew...
> Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
> The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
> Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
> The broken lily lies--the storm is overpast. (46-9; 51-3)

A Dionysian "storm" of suffering, pain and tragedy has overwhelmed Adonais's potential, which perishes "on the promise of the fruit", before its "petals" could be scattered on the breeze and so is turned to "waste". The "pale flower['s]" unspoilt innocence, nurtured by Urania as if "by some sad maiden cherished", cannot survive reality's darker forces and is reduced to a beautiful but powerless "broken lily". Adonais, like Keats's poetic character, is weaned upon the tender emotions of "true-love tears"

and easily laid to "waste" after "a single painful event". Shelley's portrait of a Keats unable to endure suffering and tragedy draws upon the imagery of Isabella where, bereft of Lorenzo, Isabella waters a basil-pot containing her lover's head. Apparently, as Curran has observed, this Keatsian allusion enhances an atmosphere of sadness, melancholy and despair when, in actuality, Keatsian imagery is used to substitute Shelley's genuine mourning for the artistic pathos of Isabella's tragic circumstances.[17] Shelley reappropriates Isabella's plant motif, grafting a grieving Isabella onto the event of Adonais's death, so that her desperate figure, an imaginative product of Keats's own encounters with tragedy, pain, and suffering, is absorbed into his own mythology. It is these tempestuous darker forces, evoked and explored in Keats's self-conscious romance, which supposedly devastate his poetic identity and mythopoeic counterpart. Yet Shelley's echo of Isabella implies the exact opposite, rendering Keats and Adonais, as those "petals nipped before they blew", without a creative breeze to inspire, and proclaim, their poetic or heroic achievements.

Shelley does not emphasise the tragic nature of Keats's poetic character, reducing the poet of Isabella to an image of a "broken lily" in a pastoral elegy and his petrifying Grecian Urn to "a lucid urn of starry dew" (91). In Adonais, Shelley attempts to translate Keats's Dionysian poetic identity back into a pastoral poet of the Apollonian mode, who is unable to bear reality's burden. Such a misreading of Keats's poetic character might seem to be another way of judging Keats inferior, when Shelley's design hinges upon establishing an equality and affinity between their poetic reputations. Shelley's revival of the literary tradition of pastoral elegy casts him in the role of Spenser lamenting Sidney and,

consequently, he must remould Keats's identity into a pastoral poet, who shepherds his "passion-winged Ministers of Thought" like they "were his flocks" (74-75). If Shelley's "extreme hope" of apotheosis is to be found in Keats's demise their identities must be made to mirror one another, so that the living and deceased poet are found to be alike:

> Most musical of mourners, weep again!
> Lament anew, Urania!--He died,
> Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
> Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
> The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
> Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
> Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
> Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
> Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light. (28-36)

In spite of an awareness of the futility of mourning Shelley as elegist persists in his plea to Urania to mourn, not simply Adonais's passing, but others who have gone before him "unterrified / Into the gulf of death". The "[m]ost musical of mourners" must "[l]ament anew" to acknowledge the worthiness of the "clear Sprite" to take his place "among the sons of light", if Adonais is to be recognised as a legitimate claimant to being one of the "immortal strain". The three "sons of light" represent a mythologised version of a literary pantheon consisting of Homer, Dante and Milton. Adonais's potential apotheosis depends upon Urania's recognition of his right to become one of the "immortal strain" and finds its counterpart in Shelley's claim, on behalf of Keats, that he should be immortalised in

the literary canon. Adonais must be deified when Urania, his mother, acknowledges his claim of lineage and Keats, who looks towards her as the muse of Paradise Lost, must be admitted to the canon when he is recognised as a poetic disciple of a "[b]lind, old, and lonely" Milton (31).

Shelley's own future apotheosis is more secure if Keats's poetic character, on the verge of deification and canonical acceptance, resembles Shelley's own poetic strengths and weaknesses. Adonais's elegiac speaker wants Urania to admit Adonais and Keats to the "immortal strain", so that Shelley can follow after, just as Keats's Thea needs Saturn to recognise his divinity for her own sake.[18] On one hand, Shelley is determined to place Adonais with immortal deities and Keats among the literary Titans of Homer, Dante and Milton and, on the other, he must defer their moment of apotheosis to stress the similarity between them and his self-styled role as an aspirant Apollo. Consequently, Shelley is eager to align himself and Keats with "Hyperion"'s Apollo, who seeks deification as a poet and god to rival these Titans. Keats's poetic character is remoulded into a poet of Flora and Pan, throwing into relief Shelley's apparently stronger poetic identity. Adonais's calculated forgetting of history and biography, paradoxically, initiates a process of transformation and provides an anchorage for Shelley's poetic identity amidst a flood of becoming. Forgoing historical and biographical circumstance is the means by which Shelley struggles to deify Keats in the present and preserve his own identity in the future. As Nietzsche writes "a man who did not possess the power of forgetting...would no longer believe in his own being, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming" (UM, 62).

The "quick Dreams" (73) which gather to mourn Adonais's death enact the elegy's impulse towards forgetfulness: one of them "with trembling hands" fades "like a cloud which had outwept its rain" (82; 90) and "[a]nother Splendour" is aligned with a a "dying meteor [that] stains a wreath / Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips" (100; 106-7). These mourners in the act of remembering Adonais forget themselves to the extent that his unfulfilled potential becomes symbolically their own, as one of them "clipped her profuse locks" (93) and "[a]nother in her wilful grief would break / Her bow and winged reeds" (97). Both actions echo Adonais's image of a "broken lily" and recall his untimely demise. Even "the moving pomp", comprised of "Desires", "Adorations", "Persuasions", "Destinies", "Splendours", "Glooms", "Incarnations", "Phantasies" and "Sorrow, with her family of Sighs" (116; 109-13), appear as a spectral "pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream" following "Pleasure [with] her own dying smile" (115-6). Both the "quick Dreams" and "slow pomp" (116) are on the verge of their own "eclipse" (108) or fading. As they forget themselves in remembering Adonais they are themselves forgotten without "the living streams / Of his young spirit" to feed upon (75-6). Shelley's images of fading and incompleteness anticipate the introduction of a grief-stricken Echo, who forgets her own identity through mourning for Adonais:

> Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
> And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
> And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
> Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
> Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
> Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear

Than those for whose disdain she pined away

Into a shadow of all sounds:--a drear

Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear. (127-35)

"Lost" in the silence of her sadness Echo renders the mountains "voiceless" and feeds "her grief with his remembered lay", forgetting her own name and no longer echoing back the noise of "winds or fountains", or "amorous birds", or "herdsman's horn, or bell". Mourning Adonais's death fuels Echo's previous grief over her unrequited love for Narcissus, reducing her to a silence beyond the "shadow of all sounds". Her "voiceless" grief is a reminder of how Narcissus's self-obsession caused Echo to pine away into a "drear / Murmur" and, given that she cannot mimic Adonais's "lips", an indication of the extent to which she is affected by his loss. Echo "will no more reply" to her surroundings, because she forgets her own shadowy existence in remembering Adonais. Like Echo, Spring is so overcome with grief she casts off her identity and the duties she should perform:

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down

Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,

Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,

For whom should she have waked the sullen year?

To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear

Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both

Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere

Amid the faint companions of their youth,

With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth. (136-44)

Without Adonais's living presence Spring can find no reason for giving life to the "sullen year" and so throws "down / Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were". The youthful exuberance and vitality of Spring take on the appearance of an autumnal demise of "dead leaves", intimating that what might seem to be life is actually death and decay. This idea is played out in this episode, where Apollo's immortalising transformation of Hyacinthus's corpse into a hyacinth is set against Apollo's responsibility for the youth's death. Apollo's love for Hyacinthus leads to his untimely demise, as Narcissus's love for "himself" causes Echo to fade away. Neither Hyacinthus nor Narcissus's own reflection was as "dear" to Apollo and Narcissus as Adonais, whose death leaves them to "stand and sere / Amid the faint companions of their youth".

It is the "sighing ruth" of these "faint companions" which Shelley compares with "the lorn nightingale", who "[m]ourns not her mate with such melodious pain" (145-6), making an association between their pity and Keats's presentation of Ruth "in tears amid the alien corn" ("Ode to a Nightingale", 67). Yet at the moment Shelley seems to have fully absorbed Keats's poetic diction, his allusions to the myth of Hyacinthus and Narcissus expose Adonais's strategy of forgetting circumstance and identity to transform Keats into Adonais and ensure his deification into a mythological and literary pantheon. The introduction of Narcissus in the company of Apollo points toward such poetic machinations on Shelley's part. To pair the self-obsessed Narcissus with Apollo, the god of poetry, is to align self-deception and poetic fiction-making.[19] Shelley and the reader are poignantly reminded, even in the moment of forgetting, that Adonais is fashioned more in his own image than Keats's and that Adonais's fate will mirror his own. Adonais's departure from the mortal world may momentarily

alter the appearance of the seasons according to Shelley as elegist, but it does not have any long-term effect upon the cycle of material nature:

> Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
> But grief returns with the revolving year;
> The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
> The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
> Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier... (154-8)

In spite of nature's ephemerality it can survive a wintry death and attain a new lease of life, in which "the airs and streams renew their joyous tone" and "the ants, the bees, the swallows reappear" with Spring's arrival as part of the seasons' perpetual cycle. In contrast to those who mourn Adonais, this cyclical renewal serves only as a reminder that "grief returns with the revolving year". This "quickening life from the Earth's heart", which invigorates the world of "change and motion" (164-5) with a "renewed might" (171), cannot revive Adonais's "leprous corpse" (172), but only with exhaled flowers "illumine death and mock the merry worm that wakes beneath" (175-6). The animating "spirit['s]" (172) failure to resuscitate Adonais's material and decaying body prompts a question concerning the destiny of his intangible spirit, or mind, which oscillates between hope and despair:[20]

> Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
> Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
> By sightless lightning?--the intense atom glows
> A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose. (177-80)

At first, Shelley's speculation as elegist suggests that mental knowledge might outlive the physical body, but this positive assertion is countered by his own question. Although the invisible mind or spirit of an individual which "knows" does not rely upon the physical body for existence, it may be "consumed...[b]y sightless lightning" before the event of the body's death. An individual's animating mind or spirit, represented by the "sword", is withdrawn prior to, and as a trigger for, the demise of the material body, which acts as its protective "sheath". A person's mental and spiritual life is like a transient and glowing "intense atom", which is extinguished at the moment of death by "a most cold repose". This epistemological speculation does not instantly secure Adonais's salvation, but it does mark a significant turning point within Shelley's elegy.[21] These speculative claims separate an invisible realm of knowing from the apparent cycle of material nature and, ambiguously, portray death as both quenching life and satiating "life's sacred thirst" (169). Yet Shelley as elegist dwells on the negative implications of his assertions to contemplate a temporal world of "change and motion" where even grief perishes:

> Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
> But for our grief, as if it had not been,
> And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
> Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
> The actors or spectators? Great and mean
> Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
> As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
> Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,

Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow. (181-9)

Even the grief of those who "have loved...him" is transient and will soon be forgotten with the passage of time, because the memory of Adonais is only preserved in the present by those mortals who continue to mourn his loss. This realisation that "grief" is "mortal" produces a series of questions, which struggle to preserve life and language as meaningful in the face of death. Uncertainties about life's origin, purpose, and a confusion over who observes and what is observed, indicate death as an origin that lends "what life must borrow". Death gives significance and impetus to existence, because life derives its meaning from being defined against, and opposed to, its extinction. Although the stanza's existential questions can only be posed in the world of "change and motion", their answers rest with death and are inaccessible to the living.[222]

Such momentary uncertainty and confusion produce an affirmation of remembered grief and a perpetual cycle of nature. The rhetorical assertion of an empirically verifiable universe, where "skies are blue" and "fields are green", leads to a temporal continuity that "[e]vening must usher night" and "night urge the morrow". But the allusion to azure skies recalls an earlier image of Adonais's "fitting charnel-roof" made from "the vault of blue Italian day" (59-60), reinforcing the idea that what is mistakenly assumed to be life is actually death. Shelley as elegist, like the mourning Echo and "quick Dreams", seeks a refuge in forgetfulness to elide historical circumstance and to value death higher than life, for it is in dying that Adonais "takes his fill / Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill" (62-3). This state of forgetfulness establishes a further link between a living Shelley as elegist and a deceased Keats as Adonais.

Nietzsche understands this human desire to forget, so that "every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished for ever" (UM, 61), and the importance of remembering, if life is not to be a "blissful blindness between the hedges of the past and future":

> If death at last brings the desired forgetting, by that act it at the same time extinguishes the present and all being and therewith sets the seal on the knowledge that being is only an uninterrupted has-been, a thing that lives by negating, consuming and contradicting itself. (UM, 61)

So a fiction of forgetfulness is a vital reminder of what is supposed to have been forgotten, because without remembering the contradictions of existence will go unnoticed. In Adonais, Shelley exposes and exploits these contradictions, deftly ensuring that forgetfulness is a way of remembering, that eternity is comprised of the "sad Hour['s]" temporality, that life leases meaning from death, and that being awake is dependent upon sleeping:

> He will awake no more, oh, never more!
> "Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
> Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
> A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
> And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
> And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
> Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
> Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
> From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung. (190-8)

Echo's recitation of Adonais's "remembered lay" had caused her to forget herself and the other Echoes to abandon their observance of a vigil of "holy silence". The silence is broken by Misery's cry for Urania to "rise / [o]ut of thy sleep" and a rejoinder from the Echoes (which wake from the trance of "their sister's song" and watchful Dreams) of "[a]rise!". Urania waking from "her ambrosial rest" places an ambiguous emphasis on a mutual dependency between states of waking and sleeping which might, potentially, rescue Adonais from his "deep and liquid rest", or reinforce his inability to awake from the sleep of death. By implication what provokes Urania to rise and become a "fading Splendour" is the act of forgetting which, eventually, becomes a reminder of the necessity of remembering and so she ascends "[s]wift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung" (197):

> She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
> Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
> The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
> Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
> Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
> So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
> So saddened round her like an atmosphere
> Of stormy mist... (199-207)

Urania's journey is depicted as "autumnal Night" pursuing "[t]he golden Day", which flees on "eternal wings" and, like a "ghost abandoning a bier", leaves the living Earth for "a corpse". This nocturnal imagery, by associating "Night" with autumn and Urania, revises the transience present

in Adonais's earlier image of "[e]vening must usher night, night urge the morrow." In stanza twenty-one, the endless round of day following night produced only another "month with woe" and a year to "wake year to sorrow" which, at best, can only lead to the tragic rememberance of Adonais's departure from the mortal world. The extended simile which describes Urania's flight, at first glance, seems to endorse a concept of temporality, comprised of sorrowful nights, days, months and years when, in fact, the "golden Day['s]" escape on "eternal wings" establishes a link between time measured by mortals and eternity. The "golden Day" and "sad Hour" have their part to play in the eternal and eternity has a part to play in them. This description enforces, literally, a previous speculation about life's derivation of meaning from death, through rendering "the Earth a corpse" and anticipating the "stormy visions" of existence (345). Autumn's connotations of a wintry death and a promise of renewed life in spring are pertinent to Urania's association with a "wild and drear" autumnal night, which signifies her coalescence of Adonais's symbolic states of waking and sleeping (even in her ascent she is both "roused" and "rapt"), life and death, and temporality and eternity:

> "Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
> Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
> All that I am to be as thou now art!
> But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!" (231-4)

Urania's address at "the mournful place where Adonais lay" (207), expresses her own grief for Adonais's death which, as both his mother and Muse to the mortal poets, has left her with a "heartless breast and burning

brain" (228). Urania's maternal aspect understands the death of her son in terms of losing a "part", or extension of herself, a loss that motivates her desire to cease being and become "as thou art". Such a desire wishes to be at one with Adonais, who is "forgetful of all ill", and to abandon a painful existence which only "lives", in Nietzsche's words, "by negating, consuming and contradicting itself" (UM, 61). Unlike Adonais, Urania "cannot thence depart" from the "stormy visions" of existence, because she is "chained to Time" through her role as inspirational Muse to the living poets. Paradoxically, Urania is both a divine muse (who must recognise Keats as one of an "immortal strain") and a grieving mother for a "gentle child":

> "Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
> Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
> Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
> Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere..." (239-42)

Adonais's daring of "the unpastured dragon in his den" (238) was premature, because his mental and spiritual faculties were not sufficiently developed for such a venture, for he neither wielded Perseus's "[w]isdom the mirrored shield" nor "scorn the spear". Adonais acts before these faculties have made their "full cycle" and so perishes without fulfilling the promise of his destiny, waning like a moon that had not "filled its crescent sphere". Adonais's undeveloped spirit is connected with the celestial body of the moon, suggesting, on one hand, that it has been eclipsed by the darkness of death and, on the other, connecting it with the endless cycle of night and day, which has a part to play in eternity. This

link is strengthened through Urania's analogy between existence, when Adonais lived, and the rising and setting sun:

> "So is it in the world of living men:
> A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
> Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
> It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
> Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night." (257-61)

The brilliance of Adonais's "godlike mind" laid the "earth bare" with its light and outshone the stars, "veiling heaven" from sight. But once Adonais's creative mind is extinguished, all those minds of lesser brightness that had "dimmed or shared its light" are left to the "awful night" caused by its extinction.

Urania's flight and address reappropriate the temporal cycles of material nature, as represented by night's continual ushering of day, to an eternal realm of a "godlike" conception of time, where day departs on "eternal wings" and the incorporeal spirit could live forever. Shelley as elegiac speaker is forced to face, even as he deliberately seeks to forget, the fictionality behind his myth of material nature's cyclical renewal, when his personification of spring can only "illumine death" and not revive Adonais.[23] Shelley as elegist is replaced by the figure of Urania who, through her actions and subsequent speech, fashions material nature's indifferent cycles into a symbolic logic of its own, which permits a vital reversal of polarities. Urania's ambivalent status, as an immortal Muse for mortal poets, initiates this revision of imagery and polarities in Adonais.

Moreover, Urania's recognition of Adonais implies that Keats may have a legitimate claim to a place among the literary pantheon.

This is emphasised by the arrival, after Urania has "ceased" speaking (262), of the poets Byron and Thomas Moore, in the pastoral guise of "mountain shepherds" with their "magic mantle rent" (262-6; 267-70). It is "[m]idst others of less note" (271) that Shelley humbly enters into his own elegy, as one of Adonais's mourners:

> ...[C]ame one frail Form,
> A phantom among men; companionless
> As the last cloud of an expiring storm
> Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
> Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
> Actaeon-like, and now had fled astray
> With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
> And his own thoughts, along the rugged way,
> Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey. (271-9)

Recalling those "passion-winged Ministers of thought", the poet's "frail Form" wavers on the verge of extinction, drifting in solitude as "a phantom among men" and "the last cloud of an expiring storm". The poet-figure's doomed existence is not only implied by the image of the last fading storm-cloud, "[w]hose thunder is its knell", but through his association with Actaeon. This "frail Form", echoing the ill-fated youth of Alastor, has once caught a glimpse of "Nature's naked loveliness" and now searches "o'er the world's wilderness" with "feeble steps" in the vain hope of gazing upon such beauty again. Actaeon's fate, which having stumbled

upon a naked Diana is to be torn apart by his own "raging hounds", illustrates the perils of looking upon beauty's quintessence. Tragically, death is the ultimate price to be extracted for seeking out "Nature's naked loveliness". It is not "raging hounds" that threaten to savage the poet-figure, but "his own thoughts" which pursue, torment, and hound him towards his premature death. Although the "frail Form" is associated metaphorically with Actaeon, who is torn to pieces, his appearance suggests that he is a votary, or representative, of Dionysus:

> His head was bound with pansies overblown,
> And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
> And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
> Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew
> Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
> Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
> Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
> He came the last, neglected and apart;
> A herd abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart. (289-97)

Shelley's newly cast role of tragic poet and mourner in Adonais bears the Dionysian symbol of a thyrsus--or "light spear topped with cypress cone"--and is associated by his "pardlike Spirit" (280) with the leopards which drew Dionysus's chariot. Such symbolism coupled with Shelley's earlier allusion to Actaeon's fate, which also suggests a ritual mutilation of the body, confirms the figure as at least a devotee of Dionysus.[24] Shelley's description of this isolated and "neglected" Dionysian figure, who grasps his "rude shaft" with a "weak

hand" and is likened to an "abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart", recalls two versions of Adonais's fatal encounter. This image of a wounded deer alludes to Shelley's first account in which Adonais is "pierced by the shaft" (11) and his "weak hand" echoes the second, narrated by Urania, who tells of Adonais's "weak hands" which dared "the unpastured Dragon in his den" (236-7).[26] Shelley's Dionysian mourner half symbolises a poet's solitary, vulnerable, existence and half points to a potential strength:

> A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift--
> A Love in desolation masked;--a Power
> Girt round with weakness;--it can scarce uplift
> The weight of the superincumbent hour;
> It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
> A breaking billow;--even whilst we speak
> Is it not broken? (280-6)

Since the creative "storm is overpast" for Adonais, or more significantly Keats, the "broken lily" of his creations must be judged by others.[25] Equally, Shelley's own powers of poetic ingenuity are tested to breaking point under the strain of "the superincumbent hour" of Keats's death. The "weight" of this tragedy is only bearable if Shelley's imagination can translate historical circumstance into a revised mythology. The tragic poet-figure, like others who have poetic sensibilities, is a spent force in the creative moment of exercising his imaginative power. He is a momentary radiance from a "dying lamp", shining at the expense of its own extinction, or a rejuvenating "falling

shower" that exhausts itself to nourish life. This mourning poet-figure extends beyond a mere image of a poetic type, like that represented in Alastor, to symbolise the aesthetic process itself. The poet's "Power" circumscribes his self-destructive nature and enacts the imaginative process that creates poetry from language. Both a poet's fragile nature and its delicate poetical creations, like "[a] breaking billow", beg the question: "even whilst we speak / Is it not broken?". Poetry is a "broken" sign left for future readers to utter, or interpret, long after the mind from which it came has been exhausted. Shelley's Dionysian figure depicts what a blessing and curse it is to exercise such an imaginative "Power / Girt round with weakness":

> He answered not, but with a sudden hand
> Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
> Which was like Cain's or Christ's... (304-6)

The tragic figure's arrival appears hopeful; his outward weakness, reminiscient of the elegy's earlier presentation of a defenceless Adonais and Keats, is a sign of an inner power. Yet there is no certainty that having such inner strength guarantees salvation from oblivion for Adonais or Keats. Shelley's poet-figure is a bearer of an ambivalent brand which suggests damnation and salvation, curse and blessing, murder and sacrifice. Shelley's allusion to the sign Cain bore after killing Abel exacerbates these ambivalences, as it was both a symbol of his crime and a protective talisman that kept him from harm during his wanderings as an outcast.[27] This Dionysian "frail form" embodies a poet's ambiguous status and imagination's creative and

destructive potential without passing a decisive judgement on the future of Adonais or Keats.

Shelley's poet-figure, like Adonais and Keats, must prove himself to be worthy of belonging to a poetic lineage endorsed by Urania. He only reveals his "ensanguined brow" in response to Urania's question, "who art thou?", so that his "[s]tranger's mein" can be recognised by her (303). The enigmatic poet-figure must, like all aspiring poets, have his "accents of an unknown land" (301) acknowledged if he is to gain acceptance into "Fame's serene abode" (45). Shelley's adoption of a Dionysian guise dramatises in symbolic action the historic process whereby literary canons are established to which new poets seek admittance through recognition. Once historical process is translated into a series of constantly revised symbols, which reverse polarities and exploit ambivalences, Adonais and Keats can be preserved from total oblivion:

> He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
> Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.--
> Dust to the Dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
> Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
> A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
> Through time and change... (336-41)

Within Shelley's invented mythology, Keats and Adonais attain an uncertain mode of being "with the enduring dead", caught between transience and eternity, life and death, and waking and sleeping. "Time and change" reduce their physical bodies to dust, but it is their

temporal destruction which allows "the pure spirit [to] flow / Back" to a "portion" of eternity. "[T]he Eternal" saturates the material world of "time and change" with its overspilling and radiant "burning fountain" to which the "pure spirit" of Adonais and Keats return after their physical deaths. Spirit and matter, eternity and transience, interpenetrate one another. Adonais survives physical death through asserting a posthumous influence as a part of "the one Spirit's plastic stress [that] / Sweeps through the dull dense world" (381-2). Equally, immortality for Keats and Shelley depends upon the posthumous survival of their works to assert an imaginative influence on the world.[28] Such imaginative influence can only be conjectured about from Shelley's historical vantage-point and finds its symbolic counterpart in Adonais's speculative assertions about an unproven metaphysical absolute. This type of fiction is necessary if the uncertain terrain beyond the "shadow of our night" (352) is to be charted with Shelley's poetic language. The central claim that Adonais "hath awakened from the dream of life" (344) is dependent upon a rhetorical confidence in an "Eternal" absolute and the elegy's previous revisions of the relationship between waking and dreaming, living and dying:

> 'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
> With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
> And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
> Invulnerable nothings.--We decay
> Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
> Convulse us and consume us day by day,
> And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay. (345-51)

Life is utterly detestable and futile, populated only by frenzied "phantoms" who are "lost in stormy visions" of a nightmarish existence. The emphatic "We decay" incoporates everyone in the final, terrifying, throes of death which "[c]onvulse us and consume us day by day". Human existence has been mistaken for actual living when, in fact, it is a plague of "fear and grief" which aided by our "cold hopes" devours "our living clay". By contrast, Adonais is secure "from the contagion of the world's slow stain" and no longer need "mourn / A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain" (356-8). The familiar temporal world of historical circumstance and change is devoid of significance and vitality, rendered as "that unrest which men miscall delight" (354), to permit Adonais's safe refuge in a transhistorical haven of the "Eternal" without "[e]nvy and calumny and hate and pain" (353).

In a moment of rhetorical exuberance, Shelley ignores how crucial temporality is to his notion of eternity and history's role in establishing a posthumous influence for a poet. Ironically, Shelley's success in saving Adonais from death's oblivion relies upon his own insistence that waking and dreaming, living and dying, time and eternity are interpenetrable. There are no life-affirming signs in this description of human existence, as if Shelley has surrendered his faith entirely to an absolute and metaphysical reality. Any scepticism here is apparently concerned with life and not metaphysical systems, which Shelley had previously called into question in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc". The "dull dense world" is entirely dependent upon the metaphysical realm and Adonais, as "a portion of the loveliness", must compel the material world with "its beauty and its might" (379; 386):

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own... (370-6)

It would appear that Shelley's decision to represent his conjectures about a deceased poet's literary influence in the guise of metaphysical speculations about an afterlife has led him into his own rhetorical trap. Shelley is compelled, through his own symbolic logic, to deny life in favour of a transcendental haven for Adonais to ensure that aspirant poets, like Keats and himself, have a potential influence upon the world after their deaths. Paradoxically, a poet's only hope for a continued influence is to entrust his imaginative legacy to the inhabitants of a worthless and denigrated world, from which he should be relieved to have escaped. Shelley's account of Adonais's union with "Nature" emphasises his dilemma and appears to endorse a universe animated by a transcendental "Power" over which the poet has no control.[29] Yet Adonais's idealised communion with the universe restores a balance between the spiritual and material, as "[h]e is made one with Nature" through his absorption into a "Power", which with "never wearied love" nourishes the physical world (377-8). This transcendental "Power" is not entirely alienating or alienated from a natural, transient, world. Although Adonais's character is obliterated in the "Power", he can, as a "portion of the Loveliness", mould the "unwilling dross" to "its own

likeness" (384-5). Adonais's influence upon Nature, with its tyrannical "torturing" of unbending material, echoes more strongly Wordsworthian poetic encounters with Nature than that of a Keatsian Negative Capable poet.[30] Nonetheless, Shelley's allusion to "the song of night's sweet bird" is a reminder of Keats's own self-conscious poetic song about a nightingale and of his own self-conscious lament, in the form of Adonais, for "Ode to a Nightingale"'s deceased author. Metaphysical speculation about Adonais's spiritual union with the "Power" turns out to contain a more literary concern about a dead poet's literary legacy, which it is hoped will remain as a posthumous "presence to be felt and known". This potent Adonais, who emerges in the second movement of Shelley's elegy, is to act as a beacon to subsequent generations, exerting an influence analogous to a dead author's works once they have been accepted into the firmament of literary tradition:

> The splendours of the firmament of time
> May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
> Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
> And death is a low mist which cannot blot
> The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
> Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
> And love and life contend in it, for what
> Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
> And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air. (388-96)

Momentarily, those poets who shone in "the firmament of time", are "eclipsed" from view as they are enshrouded by death's "low mist". Their

brilliance is not permamently "extinguished" and, passing beyond death, these poets ascend "[l]ike stars to their appointed height". Death may obscure a deceased poet's "brightness", but its diaphanous "veil" is not substantial enough to "blot" out such heavenly bodies. When these writers' "names on Earth are dark", like the "many more", their "transmitted effluence cannot die / So long as fire outlives the parent spark" (406-8). These past greater writers and thinkers leave their legacies behind, so those of "young heart" touched by "lofty thought" can chart their own course, through those who "move like winds of light on dark and stormy air", to beyond their "mortal lair". Authors' reputations rely upon their literary works being read, interpreted, and re-interpreted by new and successive generations of readers.[31]

To plot such a course is to discover the "thrones" of those "inheritors of unfulfilled renown", which are "built beyond mortal thought" (397-8). Shelley names Chatterton, Sidney and Lucan as "inheritors of unfulfilled renown" suggesting, ambivalently, that their youthful demises both denied them earthly fame and an opportunity to fulfil their literary potential. These allusions are particularly apt to circumstances surrounding Keats's untimely death and Shelley's view that "Hyperion" was proof of his contemporary's tremendous poetical potential which, tragically, was never to be fulfilled. Although Adonais's strength of intellect, or spirit, was not fully exercised in life, its mighty legacy triumphs, burning through death's "veil" to a "kingless sphere" prepared for him (412-3) to become the "Vesper" (414) amongst those "inheritors of unfulfilled renown".

Counterpointed against Adonais's triumphant ascent, on the verge of apotheosis, is an imagined return to the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, where Keats, and Shelley's son, William, were both buried. Shelley's poignant description permits a personal note of grief to enter his elegy, which is intended to act as a spur for the living to pursue Adonais beyond "life's decay" (431):

> ...[T]hese graves are all too young as yet
> To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
> Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
> Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
> Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
> Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
> Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
> Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
> What Adonais is, why fear we to become? (451-9)

Shelley must, if he seeks out Adonais, pass beyond the deaths of his literary ancestors and contemporaries, or even the painful loss of his own child, to a direct confrontation with his own death. Death, represented by "the shadow of the tomb", offers a comforting haven "[f]rom the world's bitter wind" of pain, suffering and sorrow. Shelley's efforts to recover Adonais from oblivion have led to the construction of a poetic logic which, inescapably, orientates his own being towards death. The question, "What Adonais is, why fear we to become?", both urges us to orientate ourselves towards our own deaths and suggests that we might have good cause to linger before charting the

unknown territory of our own extinction. Yet to entertain doubt is to be aligned with the "[f]ond wretch" (416), who is incapable of exercising imaginative power to cast his "spirit's light / Beyond all worlds" (418-9).

Adonais's rhetorical strategy forces Shelley as elegaic speaker and its audience into choosing between an active confrontation with their own destruction or a life in which they "decay / Like corpses in a charnel". Over a death comprised of rotting in the "charnel" of life, Adonais recommends an active confrontation with death's oblivion which, in the words of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, is a consummating and "voluntary death that comes to me because I wish it [weil ich will]" (Z, 97). Such an active seizing of death, in Zarathustra's view, is a "spur and a promise to the living" (Z, 97), because dying worthily requires that "your spirit and your virtue still glow like a sunset glow around the earth" (Z, 99). This kind of confrontation with death is not a denial of an individual's life; it is a means to affirm what a particular existence has meant by stamping its extinction with its own unique character, or as Derrida has written:

> In order to put oneself to death, to give oneself death in the sense that every relation to death is an interpretative apprehension and a representative approach to death, death must be taken upon oneself. One has to give it to oneself by taking it upon oneself, for it can only be mine alone, irreplaceably.[32]

Momentarily, Shelley's verbal urgency passes over any fears about becoming "[w]hat Adonais is", and governed by an overriding desire to

undergo the same transformation as Adonais, he faces his own irreplaceable death in order to perpetuate his unique literary legacy. What occurs, at first, appears to be a final affirmation of a metaphysical reality to which death will permit access:

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.--Die,
> If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek! (460-5)

The Neo-Platonic "One" is an ultimate manifestation of the transhistorical realm of eternity encountered previously in Adonais. "The One" endures, with a constant "Heaven's light", outside of the historical, temporal, sphere of "Earth's shadows". Life imaged as a fragile "many-coloured glass" dome underlines how, all too easily, "Death tramples it to fragments". Shelley's rhetorical skills ensure a more positive response to the instructive assertion of "[d]ie, / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!" than to the passive image of being trampled to death. Shelley's imagery plays out his previous dilemma, on a universal scale, with an increased urgency and continues to favour putting "oneself to death" over a passive extinction. It is, according to Adonais's poetic logic, more desirable to be at one with a "white radiance of Eternity" than to view its pure brilliance through a distorting lens of life's "many-coloured glass" dome. If speculating about eternity's "white radiance" from life's vantage point is invalid,

then Shelley is challenging the foundations of his own elegy and risks, as a poet, surrendering his power over language to a force beyond his imagination and control. This revelation allows a re-emergence of repressed fears, as it becomes increasingly evident that Shelley's command to "die" is tense with anxieties over encountering the uncontrollable, inexpressible, and unknown.[39] These anxieties find direct expression in a series of questions, which find their reply in rhetorical bravado:

> Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?...
> 'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
> No more let Life divide what death can join together.
> (469; 476-7)

There is a moment of trepidation, an awareness of an attachment to life that cannot be severed without reluctance or a desire to "turn back" towards human existence. Yet Shelley is forbidden by his own poetic logic, which he has come to question, to "linger" forever in anticipation of embarking upon this dark, treacherous, voyage. Worse still, Shelley must chart a course he cannot record accurately for a haven he fears his poetic language cannot represent. Shelley's scepticism, at this point, renders him impotent to resist the power of his own mythology and he finds himself compelled to "hasten thither" to where "Adonais calls" in the hope that there "death can join together" what life divides. Nietzsche is sensitive to what kind of conviction is required for a sceptic to put out on a perilious voyage for an uncertain harbour and understands how important it is to make such a journey:

Enough and more than enough of the wild and erring voyage over strange [Fremden] dark seas! At last a coast appears in sight: we must land on it whatever it may be like, and the worst of harbours is better than to go reeling back into a hopeless infinity of scepticism. (UM, 116)

Adonais's final stanza bears witness to the conviction and doubt, impotence and strength, elation and fear, optimism and scepticism, required to undertake such an uncharted "voyage over strange [Fremden] dark seas":

> The breath whose might I have invoked in song
> Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
> Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
> Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
> The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
> I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar... (487-92)

Shelley relinquishes himself and his poetical powers to the uncontrollable "breath" his "song" for Keats has "invoked". He must abandon the "trembling throng" of life and sail in solitude "[f]ar from the shore", abandoning those "[w]hose sails were never to the tempest given". Shelley's ascent begins when the "breath" he has invocated "[d]escends" upon him and drives his "spirit's bark" beyond "[t]he massy earth and spheried skies". Both "earth" and "skies" are "riven" by Shelley's flight "from the shore", implying his transgression of conventional physical and spiritual boundaries. His voyage is a

thrilling and terrifying transcendence of transient existence and the formal constraints of the genre of elegy.[34] Once again, in Adonais, metaphysical speculation turns out to have a literary significance. The basis for Shelley's strength of conviction about an "abode where the Eternal are" (495) is rooted in his desire to establish his own literary legacy. Shelley's literary works, as much as his being, are "borne darkly, fearfully, afar" on the mighty "breath" of inspiration over which he has lost control. His dark, uncertain journey is analogous to the fate of his literary creations which will be scattered, like Shelley's "dead thoughts" at the close of "Ode to the West Wind" (63), on a powerful, inspirational breath to unknown future generations of readers.[35]

In Adonais the single historical moment of Keats's tragic death occasions a meditation on the posthumuous fate of writers and their works. Such a meditation witnesses Shelley's deferral of grief, through a forgetting of historical circumstance, to clear an artistic space for his own imaginative rhetorical strategies. This creative act of forgetting cannot, indefinitely, suppress historical pressures and circumstance. Shelley's contemplation of a transhistorical realm is shown to be integral to a notion of a temporal sphere, which allows a re-emergence of history and a human need for remembrance. Adonais is an enduring monument to the spirits of Adonais, Keats and Shelley, which are suspended in the moment of their becoming, "like flame transformed to marble" (447). Yet their final fates must be determined outside of language and life. Adonais transforms one specific historical moment into a complex universal mythology to empower a deceased Keats at the expense of Shelley's own poetic powers. Shelley is forced to orientate

his being towards death. He finally realises that his poetic reputation is dependent upon entrusting his literary legacy to an audience of unknown inheritors over whom, save the traces of his own imaginative power in Adonais, he is powerless. Adonais's encounter with human mortality affirms life and liberates existence from death's tyranny. For Shelley, John Keats's moment of death occasioned a timely meditation on an untimely demise.

Notes

[1] JKP, 13, 225-6.

[2] SPW, 4, 658.

[3] Z, 97.

[4] Lloyd Abbey, Destroyer and Preserver: Shelley's Poetic Skepticism (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1979), 106; 163 n.2.

[5] AV, 172.

[6] Stuart Curran, "'Adonais' in Context," SRE, 176.

[7] James A.W. Heffernan, "Adonais: Shelley's Consumption of Keats," Romanticism: A Critical Reader 1995 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 173-91, hereafter referred to as RCR. This discussion of Adonais was first published as "Adonais; Shelley's Consumption of Keats," SiR 23 (1984), 295-315. See Angela Leighton, Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 125-49, hereafter referred to as SS. See Peter Sacks, LC, 379-400. See also William A. Ulmer, "'Adonais' and the Death of Poetry," SiR 32 (1993): 425-51, hereafter referred to as ADP.

[8] Hogle offers one of the most useful and explicit accounts of psychological process in Adonais. See SP, 294-319. Michael O'Neill has explored the elegy's awareness of its own creative process, commenting that Adonais's "imagery serves to shade in the imagination's potential limitations as well as its possibilities". See Michael O'Neill, "'The Mind Which Feeds This Verse': Self-and Other-Awareness in Shelley's Poetry." Durham University Journal (1993): 280; 279.

[9] Biographical details consist of the personal events involved in Keats's demise, such as Joseph Severn's nursing of the consumptive poet, but they also contribute to the actual, literal, historical moment of Keats's death. The occurrence of an historical moment is irrefutable and occasions a series of often conflicting interpretations of what happened. So history relies upon a belief in an event as an originator of these interpretative accounts, but cannot avoid the fact that what it records is a series of fictions. This fictional status of history enables Shelley to avoid the painful, literal moment of Keats's death and re-write that moment by incorporating it in his own mythology.

[10] RCR, 175-7.

[11] Curran points to echoes of "Hyperion" in Adonais. See SRE, 171. See also LC, 383-4. Wasserman is right to suggest that Adonais celebrates Keats as a poet of Pan and "not the heroic epic of 'Hyperion'". See SCR, n. 28, 496.

[12] Wasserman offers a thorough and comprehensive account of the connotations of the name, Adonais. See SCR, 464-6.

[13] These intentions in Adonais's opening were earlier rehearsed, probably in the spring of 1818, by Shelley in his translation of Bion's "Death of Adonis". Shelley's translation exhibits a self-conscious ritual of grief similar to that present in Adonais. In the "Death of Adonis" such ritual mourning is for a "lovely one [who] lies wounded in the mountains" and causes Echo to resound: "[w]ho will weep not thy dreadful woe o Venus". See Fair-Copy Manuscripts of Shelley's Poems in European and American Libraries, The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics vol. 8. Ed. Donald H. Reiman and Michael O'Neill, (New York:

Garland, 1997), 263; 267; xix-xx. See also Jennifer Wallace, Shelley and Greece: Rethinking Romantic Hellenism (London: Macmillan, 1997), 111-14.

[14] I use the term "Shelley as elegist" to distinguish between the earlier movement in Adonais where Shelley calls for mourning and his later entrance in the elegy as the Dionysian mourner with the "Stranger's mien" in stanzas 33 and 34.

[15] Leighton makes the point that "Shelley's elegy admits the fact that to write is to forgo the real nature of grief". See SS, 126. Sacks argues that the earlier part of Adonais lacks a personal voice as grief is delegated to other mourners. See LC, 382.

[16] RCR, 174.

[17] Curran offers a detailed account of Shelley's borrowings of Keatsian imagery from the 1820 volume in Adonais. See SRE, 170-1.

[18] Sacks notes this parallel with "Hyperion" and the scepticism involved in the efforts to wake Adonais and Saturn. See LC, 383-4.

[19] Tetreault makes this observation. See PL, 230.

[20] Wasserman similarly argues that Shelley ensures nature's ability to renew is transmuted into the capacity to resurrect the spirit. See SCR, 476.

[21] I agree with Wasserman that Adonais's overall strategy is to promote mind, or spirit, over material nature. However, I consider the elegy's second movement more speculative than his account allows. See SCR, 470-3.

[22] Tetreault makes a similar point. Curran understands this stanza as reworking the questions Keats poses at the close of "Ode to a Nightingale". See PL, 230-1. See also SRE, 173-4.

[23] Leighton "emphasises the disassociation of the song and the facts". See SS, 139; 137-8.

[24] There is general critical consensus concerning links between this figure and Dionysus. See AV, 167 and ADP, 443. See also ER, 221-2.

[25] Wasserman identifies similarities between the Dionysian mourner and Adonais. See SCR, 500; 484-8. Although, I do not agree that Shelley's use of the Actaeon myth is only a slight distortion of Adonais's final disclosure. Wasserman, as Clark notes, makes a "hasty assumption of a personal immortality" at this point in the elegy. See ER, 222.

[26] Hogle understands the "broken lily" image as a sign that has been "cut off from...their own acts of reference". I am extending this notion, so that the "sign" is a poetic work and the missing referent is its deceased author. See SP, 299.

[27] Clark points to the ambivalence of Cain's mark. See ER, 223.

[28] Clark discusses Shelley's "type of immortality" as "an enduring influence". See ER, 222.

[29] Tetreault argues that the speaker has given himself over to a governing transcendental "Power". See PL, 231.

[30] Sacks argues that Keats is misrepresented as favouring an "egotistical sublimity". He also notes parallels between Adonais's closing stanzas and Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode". See LC, 396-7.

[31] Similarly, Kelvin Everest reads this stanza as implying "Keats's immortality will take the form of endless mental reincarnations in the minds of idealistic young readers." See Everest, "Shelley," in The Romantic Period. The Penguin History of Literature Ser. vol 5. Ed. David B. Pirie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 339.

[32] Jacques Derrida, The Gift of Death. 1992. Religion and Postmodernism Ser. Trans. David Wills (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1995), 45.

[33] Tetreault makes this point about Shelley's command to "[d]ie". Alternatively, Woodman argues that "Shelley is describing the suicidal moment". See PL, 232. See also AV, 173.

[34] Sacks argues that Adonais closes by striving beyond life and literary form. See LC, 400.

[35] Clark suggests important similarities between "Ode to the West Wind" and Adonais. See ER, 222-3.

Chapter 6

"Knowledge Enormous": Self-Fashioning in Keats's "Hyperion" Fragments and Shelley's The Triumph of Life.

But cannot I create...[1]

(John Keats)

I have suffered what I wrote...[2]

(P.B. Shelley)

[W]e want to be the poets of our lives...[3]

(Friedrich Nietzsche)

Romantic fragments receive a unique status from literary scholars, who understand this poetical form as being distinctly different from the fragmentary writings of Classical authors such as Sappho, or even Chaucer's incomplete project of The Canterbury Tales.[4] Both Keats's "Hyperion" projects and Shelley's unfinished The Triumph of Life belong to the category of Romantic fragment poem, although their incomplete states occurred for very different reasons. The Triumph of Life ends abruptly with Shelley's accidental drowning whereas Keats's "Hyperion" fragments are curtailed by inherent structural difficulties in their poetic design. These literary fragments heighten a sense of reader responsibility, as a complete reading of their texts relies upon the audience's creative speculation. Their abrupt endings make a reader conscious of being actively involved in a relationship with an author's text. Critics have often observed how

Romantic fragment poems foreground the audience's role, so that "[t]he writer and the reader both have a part to play in the poetic process"[5] and become "actors rather than spectators" who teach "the text what we would learn from it".[6] Reader and author are jointly implicated in the fiction-making process, acutely aware that the re-invention of one by the other involves a reconstruction of their own identity.

In Romantic fragment poems, meaning and identity are forever indeterminate, only to be endlessly invented and interpreted. This continual process is emphasised by the unfinished form of a Romantic fragment, which questions Enlightenment's obsession with fixed, totalising, metaphysical explanations of the universe. Keats's "Hyperion" fragments and Shelley's The Triumph of Life offer a critique of Enlightenment belief in a stable world of the rational and suggest that Reason, as Nietzsche diagnoses, has "made the 'real' world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being" (WP, 3, 3, 507). Like Nietzsche, Keats and Shelley understand metaphysics as only one interpretation of the universe out of an infinite series of other possible fictions. Such a view incorporates metaphysics into the metaphorical mode, regarding Enlightenment philosophy as merely another fiction, rather than a fixed absolute. Beyond metaphysical constraints, the self and world are open to an endless invention and revision. This creative freedom requires an embracing of existence's pleasures and pains without consolation from the transcendental realm of metaphysics. Nietzsche defines such an act as "amor fati: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity" (EH, 68). Encounters with human suffering, mutability and tragedy are essential aspects of "[k]nowledge enormous" (Hyperion, 3, 113) which the self must master, if it is to realise its full potential in

Keats's "Hyperion" poems or Shelley's The Triumph of Life. Yet to master tragic knowledge of this kind is to have attained a perspective on human existence above and beyond life which, for Nietzsche, is the vantage-point of the Overman [Übermensch]. This perspective is hard-won because, as Rajan has commented on The Triumph of Life, "to be our own gods is also to submit to the lasting misery and loneliness of the world" (DI, 71).

Struggle between the Classical gods of the Olympian and Titanic factions is central to an understanding of Keats's "Hyperion" fragments. This conflict allows Keats to explore further his anxieties about identity and finds a Nietzschean counterpart in the warring of metaphorical and metaphysical modes of language. Like fiery aspirant Apollos, Keats and Nietzsche rise from the ruins of a fading metaphysical order, prophesying a new metaphorical era to replace the old scheme. Emphasis on self-invention as a revisionary process means that construction of a new identity must be rooted in what previously existed. This paradox is played out in Keats's "Hyperion", where the ardent promotion of revolution results not in Titanic downfall but points to a revolutionary change occurring at some future time.

What prevents narrative and revolutionary fruition in Keats's fragment is a profound crisis of self-identity, enacted both by Saturn, who must define a new identity without the power relations of kingship (1, 125-6), and the aspiring Apollo, who must define a new ruling identity. Lifeless silence governs the fallen Saturn "quiet as a stone" in the "shady sadness of the vale" (1, 4; 1), intimating the death of his Titanic voice and his inability to hold sway in the universe. If Saturn is incapable of "'god-like exercise'" (1, 107), the metaphysical fiction of a "'strong identity'" or "'real self'" (I, 114)--once the guarantee of his universal power--is no

longer meaningful in a changing cosmos. Paradoxically, Keats's description of the negations of sound, resonance, and life evoke their presence through the depiction of their absence. The text abounds with fresh outgrowths of meaning at the exact narrative point where all else is supposedly silenced and barren. Saturn is never robbed entirely of his capacity for "'godlike exercise'". He remains frozen as "natural sculpture" (1, 85), but contemplates a new fiction for interpreting the self and world: "'But cannot I create? / Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth / Another world, another universe...'" (I, 141-3).

Silencing the Titanic voice is constantly intimated but never achieved. Clearly, "Hyperion"'s cultural transition, represented by a transference of power from Titan to Olympian, cannot occur simply as a sharp break with Titanic reign. Apollo must fashion his own identity, voice, and order, in the light of past Titanic experience, much as Keats must forge his poetic character through a revision of the gigantic literary legacy of Dante, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and Wordsworth. Using a similar strategy, The Triumph of Life revises substantial parts of Petrarch's Trionfo d'Amore, Dante's Divine Comedy and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"[7], so that Shelley can distinguish his poetic character from these established poets and authorise his poem with the seal of literary tradition. Keats's revisionary figure of Apollo re-animates a past cultural and poetical legacy with his own lifeforce--or rather imaginative powers--so that he can confront his own self-negation and "'fashion forth'" a new cultural and literary identity for himself. Keats's description of Saturn's lifeless condition does not seal him within a sarcophagus of silence, but reanimates the fallen Titan so that a new poetical voice--whether Olympian or Keatsian--can be liberated.

Apollo's predicament parallels Saturn's past and present dilemma: he must "'fashion'", or create, a new identity if his "'unpractis'd hands'" (1, 62) are ever to command the universe. Apollo's deification falters on the text's margins, caught between identity and non-identity, between a metaphysical system of certainty and the uncertainty of a metaphorical mode and, ultimately, between life and death. Such a failed transformation, like Saturn's faltering decline on the "margin-sand" (1, 15), highlights the poem's ability to blur distinctive states of being and modes of consciousness. "Hyperion"'s abrupt ending forces life and literature to spill over into one another, so that its failed self-transformations force a disclosure about the author's and reader's own inventive efforts to fashion new self-identities.

No matter how the lesson of Thea's tragic "eyes eterne" (1, 117) is interpreted, Apollo's transformation and reign (if it were included within the boundaries of the text) would only create a "strong identity" and incarcerate Apollo within a metaphysical scheme. The superiority of Apollo's reign over Saturn's depends upon its strategic deferral to a point in time and space outside the text, which avoids fixing his identity in the poem's narrative: "At length / Apollo shriek'd;-and lo! from all his limbs / Celestial...'" (3, 134-5).

Apollo occupies a threshold between mortal man and immortal deity, a transition indicating a crisis on the margin--or what Derrida terms the "borderline"--of the text.[8] The Derridean "borderline" marks a cross-over point between the life and work of an author, forcing a merging of life and literature. Derrida chooses this expression for the subtitle of his own oblique piece of criticism on <u>The Triumph of Life</u> which, on one hand,

obscures an already difficult text and, on the other, unravels many of the problems that criticism has encountered with Shelley's poem:

> I register, I record this remark on the shore of what is called the unfinishedness of "The Triumph of Life", at the moment when Shelley is drowned.[9]

Derrida's laconic remark collapses and conflates the complexity of varying critical accounts of Shelley's fragment. The notion of "registering" and "recording" appears to suggest a certainty about the relation between the processes of writing and reading in The Triumph of Life, particularly as in Derrida's view both are allegories of one another.[10] This critical certainty is belied by a repetition of "I" and the inscription of this remark upon a sandy sea-washed shore, which re-enacts the poem's uncertainty about who or what is persistently asking questions about origin, presence and meaning. Cleverly, Derrida evokes de Man's notion of "effacement...[as]...the loss of a face" and the reading process as one of erasure (RR, 100). Consequently, the "I" confidently asserted to "register" or "record" The Triumph of Life's meaning is threatened by an evocation of de Manian "effacement" and its status questioned. Derrida's comment is a pointed reminder not only of Shelley's The Triumph of Life as fiction, but of the fictive nature of any critical reading. Recalling Keats's "margin-sand", The Triumph of Life's image of the shoreline suggests its occupation of a textual and geographical verge and preoccupation with an undetermined transitional "borderline":

> "And suddenly my brain become as sand

Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador,
Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed

"Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
Until the second bursts--so on my sight
Burst a new Vision never seen before.--" (405-10)

The fragment's concern with problems of identity, symbolised by Rousseau's quest for origin and the unknown figure in the car of Life, is perfectly expressed in this image of the waves erasing "[t]he tracks" in the sand. For de Man, Shelley's image represents a "failure to satisfy a desire for self-knowledge" (RR, 99), because of the ultimate impossibility of accurately recording such knowledge on the sandy surface of Rousseau's transformed "brain". These lines are rendered by de Man as recording a nihilistic erasure of the figural "I" at the exact moment of its own positing. To go against the tide of de Manian opinion would be to interpret these lines as a tragic attempt at self-invention and an exploration of the linguistic difficulties involved in such a process.'' This deconstructive reading turns on the impossibility of knowing and reading, implying that central to all attempts at self-fashioning, or self-knowledge, is a subscription to the illusion of idealism.

For de Man, Rousseau asking "[s]hew whence I came, and where I am, and why--" (398) is a question posited with a naïve expectation that he will be answered with a revelation of the metaphysical absolute underpinning self and life. Yet it is precisely the idealism of Rousseau's question which permits a sceptical realisation about the impossibility of metaphysical

absolutes. Idealistic illusions are stripped away to disclose a sceptical mode of epistemological and ontological uncertainty, as the self is perpetually erased by the constant action of shifting sands and a continual sea-change. The questioning "I" of The Triumph of Life is never entirely erased, for as one identity fades the creation of another modified one begins. These washed-away deer "tracks" are replaced by those of the pursuing wolf which, momentarily, "leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore" before they are also swept away, just as this particular vision "bursts" into another.

Paradoxically, de Man's analysis of this image as one of self-erasure presupposes a metaphysical notion of self. If the desire for self-knowledge had been realised in The Triumph of Life, the "tracks" would remain forever imprinted on the shore. Such indelible markings would echo the "large foot-marks" (1, 15) left behind by Keats's Titans, for their successors to follow at their own peril. Put differently, de Man's critical effort to erase the self leads only to a re-emergence of its importance and an awareness of its elusive fictional status. De Man's concept of the "disfigured" (RR, 123) in The Triumph of Life is indicative of scholarly endeavours to create a readable text of Shelley's fragment, but not of the impossibility of reading. Donald Reiman's editorial task was occasioned by the random occurence of Shelley's death[12], as this event rendered the manuscript of the poem forever fragmented, displaced, incomplete and, for precisely these reasons, forever readable. Like the allegorical relation between reading and writing, the readability of The Triumph of Life is a direct result of its unreadability in manuscript form. De Man's endless "madness of words" (RR, 122) is avoidable if, as Rajan suggests, the effacement of one reading is the means to recovering another (SR, 349).

The conflict between Olympian and Titan, in Nietzsche's words, represents a transitory stage between the "old shattered law-tables", or the "name" of the deceased poet, and the "new-law tables--half written" (Z, 216), which are the partly completed processes of the readers' countersignatures to the author's autograph.

Transformation of Apollo falters in the indistinct textual twilight of the "borderline", caught between mortality and immortality, linguistic certainty and uncertainty, and identity and non-identity, all of which indicate a return to the prefiguring event of Saturn's crisis on the threshold of the "margin-sand". This transitional twilight imagery characterises The Triumph of Life's description of daybreak where, according to the narrator who relates his "waking dream" (42), "before me fled / The night; behind me rose the day" (25-6) as the "Sun sprang forth / Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask of darkness fell from the awakened Earth" (2-4). Shelley's patterns of light and darkness reflect a confusion about states of consciousness and modes of knowledge inherent in the narrator's account, who is so uncertain of the exact nature of his experience and identity that even spatially he is caught between "the Deep...at my feet" and "Heaven above my head" (27-8).[15] For Keats, a blurring of two apparent opposites at the extreme edges of "Hyperion"'s text sets a precedent for similarities between Saturn's "Will to Knowledge" and Apollo's "Will to Power"; in fact, Saturn's "Will to Knowledge" could be the product of a corrupted "Will to Power". These power relations are worked out through a pattern of ascent and descent and, finally, merged in a literal twilight when Hyperion battles to prevent his own fall from power and Apollo's deification:

Rajan's recent reading offers a less nihilistic deconstructive account of The Triumph of Life. Although she accepts the absolute loss and irrecoverability of the poem's original meaning, she does not surrender the text to the repetitive gloom of de Man's assertion that "to read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat" (SR, 122). Rajan chooses instead to view the effacement of one reading as the means to a recovery of another (SR, 349). What emerges is an endless series of writings and readings through which author and reader participate in a continual process of successive self-revision and self-fashioning. Shelley's posthumous influence rests with an infinite number of readers' re-constructions of his poetic identity.

Keats's "margin-sand", like Shelley's shoreline, reveals "Hyperion"'s own autotelic structure. The once living, now deceased Keats, is engaged in writing--or "auto-graphing"--the nature of his new poetic character, which can only derive credibility from a future that is by no means assured.[13] Only Keats's own autograph offers the chance to attain this credibility as, in Derridean terms, he becomes the "bearer of the name" John Keats (EOO, 44); a signature eternally returned to by readers of Keats and diversely interpreted--and endlessly constructed--by them through a succession of readings and re-readings, writings and re-writings. The credibility of Keats's poetical character rests with readers' eternal affirmation of his aesthetic revolution through this act of countersigning--or re-constructing--the Keatsian signature.[14] To countersign requires a reader to stamp Keats's autograph with their own personal seal and so ensure the continuation of the "name" of the deceased John Keats. Consequently, there are no limits on readers' reconstructions of the signature, for as Derrida writes, "[w]hat returns to the name never returns to the living" (EOO, 44).

And all along a dismal rack of clouds,

Upon the boundaries of day and night,

He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.

(1, 302-4).

"Hyperion" is preoccupied with a fiction-making process of self-creation and self-discovery, promising the birth of a new voice and identity through a revolutionary overthrow of Titan by Olympian, but the poem never fully realises this event. "Hyperion" does not subscribe to Oceanus's understanding of "progress", which professes to be "eternal law", preferring to explore self-creation as process rather than as a means to a particular universal stage; or as Saturn would have it, a specific state of being. "Hyperion"'s focus is on the process of a self writing itself a future fictional identity that has little guarantee of ever existing. Nietzsche, like Keats, places emphasis on this process of self-construction, rather than ascribing to the process a particular end or final state:

> [M]an is a bridge and not a goal; counting himself happy for his noontides and evenings, as a way to new dawns...
>
> (Z, 215).

Generically, "Hyperion" may take the form of an eighteenth-century progress poem'[6], but its Nietzschean understanding of Olympian dawn, as inevitable outcome rather than intended <u>telos</u>, belies its apparent Enlightenment origins. The Enlightenment myth of human progress is reversed through a negative interpretation of change. Consequently, Apollo's dawn is delayed

to avoid Hyperion's overshadowing,"like the bulk / Of Memnon's image at the set of sun" (2, 373-4). Titanic decline remains the centrepiece of "Hyperion" against Olympian aspiration, teaching a "sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self" (1, 35), which forces a suspension in the narrative. Ambivalently Keats's Titans portray, on one hand, enormous tragic suffering and, on the other, explain their tragedy as a rational necessity. In spite of Keats's distrust of reason, his empathy with Titanic demise and "Hyperion"'s parallels with the progress poem form indicate his ambiguity toward Enlightenment ideals.

A similar ambiguity is present in Shelley's treatment of Rousseau, which oscillates between rehabilitation and rejection of him as an Enlightenment writer. Even if Rousseau's rejection is the final outcome, his confessional account is central to The Triumph of Life and, like "Hyperion"'s Titans, cannot be easily displaced from the text. Shelley's ambivalent attitude to the Enlightenment is reflected by Rousseau's "last" look (546), indicating his separation from the "sad pageantry" (176), which still consists of "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire...and Kant" (235-6). The Triumph of Life's interpenetrating patterns of light and dark indicate Shelley's pre-occupation with intellectual enlightenment and ignorance.[17] This exploration of what it is to be enlightened or ignorant is played out in the numerous questions asked by the younger Rousseau and the dreaming narrator:

> Half to myself I said, "And what is this?
>
> Whose shape is that within the car? & why?"-- (176-8)

The narrator's questions are cut short by Rousseau's interjection of "Life" (180) in response to them. Rousseau's "strange distortion" (183) diagnoses in the narrator a "thirst of knowledge" (194) which once may have been like his own, but Rousseau having already "feared, loved, hated, suffered...and died" (200) has become "weary" (196) of seeking out knowledge. Rousseau's affliction extends beyond weariness to an incapacity to know, as he is unable to answer the narrator's question, "who art thou?" (199), replying only that his present form is a "disguise" and that there "was once Rousseau" (204). Rousseau's credibility as an enlightened guide is cast in a shadow of doubt before he has began to "relate / The progress of the pageant" (193). The narrator's constant questioning represents a human desire, which achieved its fullest expression in the Enlightenment, to wrest order, purpose and meaning from the indifferent, ceaseless, "mighty torrent" of life which randomly buffets an individual "through the sky [as] / One of the million leaves of summer's bier" (53; 50-1).[18] Such a desire leads to the belief that beyond the chaos of existence there is a metaphysical realm that lends life a purpose or what Shelley understands, in terms reminiscent of Adonais, as a "native noon" for "the sacred few" (131; 128). Both Shelley's narrator and the young Rousseau believe that an absolute, unquestionable and transcendental meaning can be imposed upon life, and they strive to establish its ultimate significance. By implication, Rousseau belongs with those feigners of "the morn of truth" (214) and the supposedly enlightened company of Voltaire and Kant, who remain chained to the car of Life. If Rousseau is enlightened, his insight is derived not from a system of metaphysics, but through his confessional response to the question, "[w]hence camest thou and whither goest thou?" (296). Central to Rousseau's own account of his life's quest for knowledge

is his encounter with the "a shape all light" in the "orient cavern" (344; 352):

> "...[W]hich with one hand did fling
> Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn
> Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing
>
> "A silver music on the mossy lawn,
> And still before her on the dusky grass
> Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn.--" (352-6)

Rousseau's "shape all light" is described as a product of "the bright omnipresence / Of morning" which "[b]urned on the waters of the well" (343; 346). Recalling a Wordsworthian regret for the passing of "a glory from the earth", indicated for him by "[w]aters on a starry night" and the sunshine's "glorious birth" (14-15; 18), Rousseau's vision becomes symbolic of those ideals he sought to extract from a chaotic universe. The sensual "shape all light" is a momentary coalescence of invisible vision, material insubstantiality and "many coloured" white brilliance occasioned by Rousseau's own fiction-making. She is born of a youthful Rousseau's "Will to Knowledge" which insists that the transcendental "realm without a name" (396) can be revealed and expressed in words.

The older Rousseau's confession suggests a scepticism about the "shape all light" that was absent from his original experience of her, recognising that to contemplate such ideal unity and beauty risks "the gazer's mind" being "strewn beneath / Her feet like embers" (386-7). Contemplation of an ideal metaphysical realm turns out not to be valuable in itself, but for

what is revealed about the human world of contingencies and transience. Rousseau's "shape all light" does not enlighten him through her revelational brilliance, for she is "[a]s Day upon the threshold of the east" (389), but by a "darkness" which "reillumines even the least / Of heaven's living eyes" (391-2). If the "shape all light" reveals anything to Rousseau, it is that pursuing an ideal should lead to an existential acceptance of "this harsh world" (334).[19] After all, her "fair shape waned in the coming light" of "the new Vision" with "its cold bright car" of Life (412; 434) and, having drugged Rousseau with "Nepenthe" (299), she abandons him to "the sick day in which we wake to weep" (430). Rousseau's quest for enlightenment ends with the realisation that aspirations to ideals are only "forever sought" and "forever lost" (431). More importantly, Rousseau acknowledges the "shape all light" as an illuminating darkness, which teaches an acceptance of life's procession and a certain responsibility he must have for his words that "were seeds of misery" (279). Shelley's Rousseau, if he is to avoid condemnation, has to come to terms with "a world of agony" (295) in which his mind's "fires" will be extinguished in "the dust of death" (388). In the same way, Keats's Apollo must actively embrace suffering if he is ever to achieve deification through an act of self-creation:

> But that the creator may exist, that itself requires suffering and much transformation...For the creator himself to be the child new-born he must also be willing to be the mother and endure the mother's pain. (Z, 111).

Death is a necessary precondition to self-construction in "Hyperion", because it is precisely the negation of life and the onset of Titanic decline that will permit the "new born" voices of Apollo and Keats to speak. Paradoxically, Apollo must die into immortality, as the once living Keats must surrender--through the act of writing--to the death-in-life of a suspended "Hyperion" text, if his immortal voice as author is to reach the reader from beyond the grave. Zarathustra, prophet of the noontide, acts as a signpost to the becoming Overman [Übermensch] and a constructed mask from behind which Nietzsche can teach his anti-metaphysical philosophy (even after the event of his own death). He performs a similar function to Apollo, who is prophet of a new dawn and of Keats's unique poetic identity and power soon to be born--or buried in the grave.

Yet Keats was to discard the Olympian mask of "far-flown Apollo" (1, 204) in "The Fall of Hyperion", and to experiment more directly with the processes of self-invention. The replacement of "far-flown Apollo" with a human poet-figure, and the rite of suffering undertaken by the poet in ascending the "immortal steps" ("The Fall," 1, 117), emphasise how crucial the dark wisdom of the Titans is to "The Fall of Hyperion". Keats's inclusion of a poet-figure makes "The Fall"'s action more directly relevant to the issue of self-creation. Nonetheless, the poem's events are further distanced, as is dramatic action in Shelley's The Triumph of Life, by Keats's use of a Dantean dream framework as a narrative device.[20] In spite of the centrality of suffering to both these fragments the anguish of their respective protagonists remains at an interpretative distance from the audience. Rousseau's visionary experience is told, retrospectively, within the narrator's dream and Moneta reveals her vision of the fallen Titans to a dreaming poet. Readers must sharpen their critical faculties if they are

to appreciate and affirm the tragedy at the heart of The Triumph of Life and "The Fall of Hyperion". For Keats, a retrospective account of the clash between the Olympic and Titanic factions enables a shift of focus from the displacement of one culture, power, and identity by another--the subject of the first "Hyperion" fragment--to a greater emphasis on the affirmation of suffering.

"To see as a God sees" ("The Fall" 1, 304) is the aspiration of the poet-figure, who must forge his own unique literary identity by accepting both the fictionality of his own self-identity and the inevitability of mortal suffering and death. Once again poetic self-identity and self-knowledge is to be partly constructed and partly disclosed: a process worked out for the author through the actual writing of the text and for the reader through the construction--or reading--of that writing. The implicit relation between reading and writing in "Hyperion" presents the reader as a perpetual countersigner to the poetic fragment--when confronted with the absence of the deceased author who is indefinitely incapable of signing--a role more explicitly explored in "The Fall":

> Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
> Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
> When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.
> ("The Fall" 1, 16-19).

A reader's judgement will either confine "The Fall" to the mere ramblings of a dream-crazed fanatic or, alternatively, recognise it as a work by a "poet" who has felt the "high tragedy" of the Titans (1, 277). To pronounce "The Fall", the work of a "poet" involves the reader,

imaginatively reanimating the author's hand "in the grave" and countersigning this poetic legacy by tracing "upon vellum or wild Indian leaf / The shadows of melodious utterance" (1, 5-6). If readers fail to grasp this duality of experience and consciousness, they can only condemn "The Fall" as the scribblings of a fanatic and dismiss poetic vision as mere idealised illusion. Readers must, as Shelley urges in The Triumph of Life, "from spectator turn / Actor or victim in this wretchedness" so that they actively engage with life and literature teaching the deceased author's text, in Rousseau's words, "what thou wouldst be taught" (305-7). The necessity of first hand knowledge of the "harsh world", before undertaking a process of self-revision, is emphasised by Shelley's apparent distinction between Classical "great bards of old" and recent poets of tragic feeling:

> "See the great bards of old who inly quelled
>
> The passions which they sung, as by their strain
>
> May well be known: their living melody
>
> Tempers its own contagion to the vein
>
> "Of those who are infected with it--I
>
> Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!--" (274-9)

These "great bards of old", who had previously attained sanctuary in the abode of the "sacred few", must be purged by being infected with human existence's "contagion" if their words are ever to be a balm to the world. Life cannot be substituted for a metaphysical realm and all poets,

including Rousseau, must suffer the "viler pain" of human existence with the rest of the multitude. Only those classed as the "dreamer tribe" ("The Fall," 198) by Keats's Moneta would forsake existence in pursuit of a transcendental ideal, vexing rather than comforting the world.[21] These "great bards of old", Rousseau, the dreaming narrator and The Triumph of Life's audience are compelled to embark upon a process of endless self-revision in light of their intense awareness of suffering. Shelley ensures this self-revision is viewed as a vital present and future process, which is of equal importance to the living and those who have already gone to their graves:

> New figures on its false and fragile glass
>
> "As the old faded."--"Figures ever new
> Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;
> We have but thrown, as those before us threw... (247-50)

What is tragically realised is that life and death are the two necessary conditions upon which any definition of self-identity depends. These emerging "[n]ew figures" constantly risk becoming "faded", bordering on the discovery of the falsity of their supposed truths and the fragility of their own fictionality. The validity of any one of these self-constructions will always remain in doubt and open to question, capable only of a momentary self-affirmation which must be constantly revised and replaced by "[f]igures ever new".

Keats's revision of the "Hyperion" fragment--a text itself preoccupied with the revision of a literary and cultural tradition--establishes a

complex relation between the action of writing and reading. Both Keats's "The Fall" and Shelley's The Triumph of Life are revisionary poems. "The Fall" is literally a re-reading and re-writing of "Hyperion" and The Triumph of Life reviews Adonais's rhetorical confidence in "the abode where the Eternal are" (495) and renders life an endless series of "[f]igures ever new" from which no metaphysical comfort can be extracted. The worth of these revisionary works rests with readers' individual interpretations, which are to a certain degree governed by the emphasis of these texts on the difficulty of knowing and interpreting. These fragments must be interpreted within their textual frameworks, but a reader loyal to their meaning would, finally, pass beyond their broken forms to an active life of living, knowing and suffering. This process involves the potential re-reading of the author's literary identity (or "name") and re-writing of the reader's self-identity--literature both reads and writes the author and reader as much as it is written or read by them. The double truth of "dying into life" is written on and read from Moneta's face by the author and reader. The human poet-figure, like his forerunner Apollo, must prove his ability to interpret a lesson from a face that is "deathwards progressing / To no death" (1, 261-2).

Moneta's visage reveals an active embrace of suffering and so fully grasps the double truth of "dying into life", unifying the states of life and death. Moneta attains the death-in-life condition sought by the poet-figure (who, like Keats, desires to be immortalised and so speak from the grave), by Apollo (whose deification requires a dying out of mortal life into immortality), and not least, the faithful countersigning reader (who wishes to reanimate the lifeless poet, Keats). To grasp the essential double truth beyond and over the text of the "Hyperion" fragments is, as

Nietzsche writes of Zarathustra, "to have one foot beyond life" (EH, 42) and to relish both great joy and suffering, existence and self-annihilation. New dawns of self-discovery and self-creation are only possible if death of a former self-identity is a relished prospect, or even a more literal death embraced. Saturn in the recast fragment accepts, rather than struggles, against his demise, affirming the "high tragedy" through a repetition of "moan" and the simple words: "'There shall be death'" (1, 424). This tragic consciousness of duality is present in Shelley's "icy cold" (77) anticipation of the car of Life's approach, driven endlessly on by the "Janus-visaged Shadow" whose all "four faces...had their eyes banded" (99-100):

> So came a chariot on the silent storm
> Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
> So sate within as one whom years deform
>
> Beneath a dusky hood and double cape
> Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
> And o'er what seemed the head a cloud like crape
>
> Was bent, a dun and faint etherial gloom
> Tempering the light... (86-93)

Heralded by a "cold glare...intenser than the noon" (77) and borne "on the silent storm / Of its own splendour", Shelley's chariot recalls the "Shape all light['s]" trampling of Rousseau's mind "thought by thought" (387) with its "light's severe excess" (424).[22] The "Shape" concealed

"[b]eneath a dusky hood...crouching within the shadow of a tomb" is the inevitable dark otherside to Rousseau's idealised vision of the "shape all light" and a reminder that unity, fixed meaning and transcendent ideals lead only to a realisation of reality's relentless indifference and random chaos. Such indifferent chaos is emphasised by the charioteer's "banded eyes" (104), whose blind insistence ensures submission to the car of Life's darker revelation, and the "wonder-winged team['s]" obscurity, whose "Shapes" are lost in apocalyptic and self-destructive "thick lightnings" (95-6). The chariot's "rushing splendour" points to, as the "shape all light" instructs Rousseau, the destruction of idealised vision and an acceptance of suffering and self-annihilation which in itself provides an impetus for imaginative fiction-making; the "car's creative ray" (533) is its obliterating "cold glare". Light and darkness, creation and destruction, life and death, interpenetrate one another as the "shape all light" fades into the shadowy unknown form of the "Shape". Neither vision, in The Triumph of Life, is final and the car of Life might at any moment dissolve into a new vision as the "Shape all light" is succeeded by the chariot. This implied succession of visions, or imaginative versions of reality, play out Rousseau's understanding of how "[f]igures ever new / Rise on the bubble" and his later observation that "[m]ask after mask fell from countenance / And form of all" (536-7).[23] Consequently, Shelley's fragment gestures towards an unending process of self-invention and self-revision.

The lesson in Moneta's face re-emphasises this "borderline" indistinction between life and death--in which there is "constant change...progressing to no death" (I, 260-1)--signposting the way towards the process of "becoming" without ever affirming its fruition, preferring

instead to defer the moment of consummation and its responsibility to the reader. "The Fall" enacts the same suspension of process. Though the "Hyperion" fragments are capable of pointing to the process of aesthetic self-recovery and hint at the double truths such a process requires, neither fragment is able to "'fashion forth'" an Overman [Übermensch] from the figure of Apollo, Saturn, or the poet-figure. Instead, the poetic fragments disclose and suspend the autotelic process involved in the self forging its own fictional identity. The responsibility for aesthetic self-loss and recovery is, like the worth of Keats's and Shelley's poetic identities, decisively deferred to their readers who, having traced the "large foot-marks" of the Titans along the "margin-sand" to the "borderline" of the fragments, must with Apollo make their choices about the nature of the aesthetic revolution they will countersign.

Shelley's The Triumph of Life and Keats's "Hyperion" fragments enact a Keatsian "Vale of Soul-making" (KL, 2, 102)[24], which invests individuals with a creative potentiality to attain their identities through self-invention, pre-figuring Nietzsche's belief that humanity could "overcome" itself using self-creation:

> Could you conceive a god? - But may the will to truth mean this to you: that everything shall be transformed into the humanly-conceivable, the humanly-evident, the humanly-palpable! You should follow your senses to the end! (Z, 110).

Such an aesthetic act of self-creation requires an affirmation of the whole of life, its joys and sorrows: a view which finds ultimate expression in the Nietzschean "great Yes to life" and literature (EH, 42). After all,

for Nietzsche, it is "[o]nly as an aesthetic phenomenon [that] human existence and the world [is] eternally justified" (BT, 52). To go beyond reading of Titanic loss and Olympian aspiration, or Rousseau's disillusionment, or the prophecies of Zarathustra is, effectively, to live a life and constantly create an identity through "becoming". For this reason Apollo must "die into life" and be willing to accept Titanic suffering by pursuing the "large foot-marks" ("Hyperion", 1, 15); the poet-figure must, like Apollo, embrace life and death by ascending the stairs with "iced foot" ("The Fall", 1, 132) and Rousseau must remain separate from and yet forever implicated in the "sad pageantry". Yet if the double truth contained in the self-identity crises of the "Hyperion" fragments, or The Triumph of Life, is to be grasped the reader must follow these "same steps". This responsibility, attributed to the reader by Keats and Shelley, is echoed by Nietzsche's prescription for grasping the truth of Zarathustra:

> To understand anything at all of my Zarathustra one has to possess a qualification similar to that which I possess--to have one foot beyond life. (EH, 42)

Self-overcoming may involve the grasping of certain double truths, but ironically, although they seem to exist beyond or above literature, or even life, their value does not rest with unlocking the secret of transcendence for the "becoming" Overman [Übermensch]; rather, with an active engagement in, and affirmation of, human experience and existence. "To see as a god sees", as Apollo, Saturn, the poet-figure and Rousseau know all too well, involves exercising the divine gift of self-creation and an affirmation of

human suffering and tragedy. Inevitably, the god-like aspiration of self-overcoming serves only to remind individuals of their contingent, culpable, and mortal nature, for as Nietzsche urges, the Overman [Übermensch] must joyously embrace the tragic circumstances of our human condition.

Signposts to the process of self-overcoming and self-creation are littered everywhere amongst the ruins of the fragments of Keats's "Hyperion" poem and Shelley's The Triumph of Life; waiting to be read in and written on the tragic faces of the Titans, or the death-in-life visage of the priestess Moneta, or even the hidden countenance of Mnemosyne and the "Shape" within the car of Life. The lessons written and read in these faces apparently promote an overcoming of life and literary text, through a recognition of the fictive nature of self-identity, and a seizing upon vital double truths about existence.

Neither Keats's "Hyperion" fragments nor Shelley's The Triumph of Life are prescriptive about the lessons that are written or read into them for--like Zarathustra's instructions to his disciples--their ultimate authority and meaning rests not with Keats, Shelley, or Nietzsche, but with their readers' countersignatures. Keats, Shelley, and Nietzsche ensure, through a process of infinite deferral, that the responsibility of reconstructing their texts is firmly placed with the reader. Self-overcoming is not an ideal imposed upon the readers of Keats's "Hyperion" fragments, or Shelley's The Triumph of Life, for them to admire, but an ideal that they must fashion into their own.[25] Only then can a reader truly countersign an aesthetic revolution of self-revision, and proclaim a great Nietzschean "Yes to life" and literature.

Notes

[1] JKP, 1, 141, 333.

[2] SPP, 278-9, 463. All subsequent quotations from The Triumph of Life are taken from this edition.

[3] GS, 299.

[4] Marjorie Levinson makes this point. See Levinson, The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1986), 14; 20.

[5] PL, 235.

[6] SR, 340.

[7] See Ralph Pite, "Shelley, Dante and The Triumph of Life," in Evaluating Shelley, ed. Timothy Clark and Jerrold E. Hogle (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996), 197-221. See Alan M. Weinberg, Shelley's Italian Experience. Macmillan Studies in Romanticism Ser. (London: Macmillan, 1991), 211-16, hereafter referred to as SIE. Rajan and Bloom note Shelley's allusions to Wordsworth. See DI, 61. See also SM, 222.

[8] Jacques Derrida, The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation, trans. Peggy Kamuf and ed. Christie V. McDonald (New York: Shocken, 1985), 14.

[9] Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Line," in Deconstruction and Criticism, ed. Harold Bloom et al (New York: Seabury, 1979), 103.

[10] See MP, 316.

[11] De Man argues that The Triumph of Life lacks "the agnostic pathos of dialectical battle" of Keats's Hyperion. See RR, 116-7.

[12] SR, 340-1.

[13] I am indebted to Ruben Berezdivin's discussion of autotelic structures. See Berezdivin, "Nietzsche: Drawing (an) affecting Nietzsche: with Derrida," in Derrida and Deconstruction, ed. Hugh J. Silverman. Continental Philosophy 2. (London: Routledge, 1989), 96-102.

[14] The term "aesthetic" appears to distinguish between actual life and experiencing a work of art, but it does not necessarily follow that art and life are separate. Instead what is noted is a qualitative difference between "aesthetic" and ordinary experience. Keats's "Hyperion" and Shelley's The Triumph of Life seek to remind us how art and life are constantly implicated in one another. The "aesthetic" of Keats and Shelley is not a contemplative sphere in opposition to ordinary living, precisely because it embraces tragic human life. See PPRM, 17-24. See Paul Hamilton, "'A Shadow of Magnitude': The Dialectic of Romantic Aesthetics," in Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780-1832, ed. Stephen Copley and John Whale (London: Routledge, 1992), 11-31.

[15] Weinburg makes this point. See SIE, 203-4.

[16] Alan J. Bewell and Majorie Levinson acknowledge "Hyperion" as belonging to this Enlightenment genre. See Bewell, "The Political Implications of Keats's Classicist Aesthetics," SiR 25 (1986), 220-2. See KLA, 196. See also Vincent Newey, Centring the Self: Subjectivity, Society and Reading from Thomas Gray to Thomas Hardy (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995), 112. By contrast, Michael O'Neill recognises Keats's reluctance to share in a progressive view of history and Nicholas Roe has also pointed to Keats's ambiguous attitude towards the idea of historical progression. See Michael O'Neill, "'When This Warm Scribe My Hand': Writing and History in 'Hyperion' and 'The Fall of Hyperion,'" KH, 153 and see also Nicholas Roe, John Keats and the Culture of Dissent (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 55-6.

[17] Tilottama Rajan and Balachandra Rajan offer a detailed discussion of the patterns of light and dark in The Triumph of Life. See DI, 66 and Balachandra Rajan, The Form of the Unfinished: English Poetics From Spenser to Pound (NJ: Princeton UP, 1985), 192. See also Edward E. Bostetter, The Romantic Ventriloquists: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron (Seattle: Washington UP, 1963), 187.

[18] PL, 250-1.

[19] SR, 325.

[20] Both Jones and Stuart M. Sperry note the distancing effect of "The Fall"'s dream framework. See Sperry, "Keats, Milton and 'The Fall of Hyperion'", in PMLA (1962), 77-84 and KDT, 102.

[21] Rajan makes this connection between The Triumph of Life and "The Fall". See DI, 61-2.

[22] Rajan and Bloom explore the inter-connection between the "Shape" and the "Shape all light". See DI, 68-9 and SMM, 265-7.

[23] Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra the "masks", or faces which appear in The Triumph of Life and the "Hyperion" fragments do not conceal the complexities of existence, but enigmatically problematise them. These "masks" are not used as a deceptive device to veil the nature of the self or world, but are employed as an "organizing principle that explain things" and indicates the "enigma and dissemblance of phenomena". See Charles E. Scott, "The Mask of Nietzsche's Self-Overcoming," in Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra, ed. Clayton Koelb. SUNY Contemporary Continental Philosophy Ser. (New York: New York UP, 1990), 217; 218-29, hereafter referred to as NP.

[24] Rajan connects The Triumph of Life with Keats's "Vale of Soul-making". See DI, 61.

[25] Daniel W. Conway discusses how Nietzsche uses the prophet figure of Zarathustra to ensure a reader's active participation in reading Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Zarathustra's arguments often deconstruct themselves to avoid a reader subscribing to them as an ideal model and to encourage readers to invent their own identities and interpretations of the universe. Nietzsche encourages his readers to be active participants in life and literature as opposed to passive receivers of a text and its wisdom. This kind of reader-responsibility is emphasised by Keats's "Hyperion" poems and Shelley's The Triumph of Life. See Conway, "Nietzsche contra Nietzsche: The Deconstruction of Zarathustra," in NP, 109-10.

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